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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

UNDERSTANDING PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE EARLY SCHOOLING YEARS:
A STUDY OF FOUR FAMILIES

by

©

Susan Mae Helen Gilberstad

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL, 1987

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ISBN 0-315-40890-1

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TITLE OF THESIS: Understanding Parent Involvement in the Early Schooling Years: A Study of Four Families

DEGREE: Master of Education

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: Fall, 1987

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Understanding parent involvement in the early schooling years: A study of four families", submitted by Susan Mae Helen Gilberstad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Elementary Education.

Lorene Everett Turner
Supervisor

Janis Blakey

Nancy L. Hulbert

Date October 8, 1987.

DEDICATION

To those members of my immediate and extended family who are, at the time of this writing, between the ages of four and twenty-four years, because each may yet choose to be a parent of a young child.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this naturalistic, interpretive study is to understand what parent involvement means to parents over a three year period in which four children from as many families experienced Cooperative Preschool, Kindergarten and Grade One. Written descriptions and questionnaire data, together with transcribed interview text and firsthand observational notes were used to formulate parent and teacher perceptions of involvement. For each year, parent and teacher perceptions were compared to illuminate the changing nature of parent involvement. These perceptions were used to better understand parent and teacher perspectives.

The results of this exploratory study suggest that the quality and quantity of knowledge parents have about their child's many learning environments influence parents' effectiveness at enhancing their child's development. The study suggests that as children move into the school system, parent and teacher perspectives on child development, learning and parent involvement are less understood by one another; thus, underlining the need for "shared environments" where the teacher knows more of the home situation and the parent better understands the school program environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first thank you must be given to parents, children and teachers who participated in the study.

I would like to thank my advisor, Lorene Everett-Turner who tactfully proceeded in her interaction with me such that, consistently, I was responsible for my own learning.

Thank you to my committee members, Janis Blakey and Nancy Hurlbut for their recommemdations. Because of their suggestions I further developed my knowledge about conducting meaningful research.

Thank you to all my children's schoolteachers who have been my teachers by helping me as a teacher of my children.

Thank you to my father and mother, Roy and Margaret Stauffer for their love and support.

Thank you to my mother-in-law, Dorothy Gilberstad for her patience and to my father-in-law, Robert Gilberstad who died of cancer between the time of intiating and completing this research. He always supported my interest in developing my intellectual ability.

Thank you to our children, Tyson and Nahleen for the sacrifices they had to make.

A special thank you is reserved for my husband and partner, Norm. He was my mentor and editor. No one else helped so strongly or so steadily with this task.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to describe perceptions of parent involvement in their child's learning experiences. It attempts to reveal parent understandings of these experiences as involvement changes, or remains constant, over a three year period. While it seeks to portray: (1) parent, (2) teacher, (3) child and (4) researcher perceptions of the parents' involvement with the child, it focuses on understanding parents' perceptions and what involvement means to them. Methodologically, the researcher intends that "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) illuminate areas of "quality involvement." The aim is to let participants (parents, teachers and children) speak for themselves (Coles, 1977; Lightfoot, 1983), thereby providing an interpretation of their perceptions that, when examined, promotes an understanding of what it means to be an involved parent.

This study gives participants an opportunity to reflect on their view of the child, teaching and learning theory, and parent involvement. Those parents contemplating involvement in the future, can gain knowledge and, consequently, find direction for their efforts to help children. Teachers can acquire insight and a better understanding of how and what parents see as involvement.

This research portrays, analyzes and interprets the roles, activites and relations of participants in the home, school and community environments.

The research questions are:

1. What are parents' perceptions of parent involvement in the child's learning experiences?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of parent involvement in the child's learning experiences?
3. What are the similarities and differences in perceptions of parent involvement for parents and teachers?
4. How do parents' perceptions on parent involvement change as the child matures and as parents and child experience different school programs and environments?

Rationale

Prior research on parent involvement measures children's "academic" or "cognitive" gains without providing information about affective and emotional benefits. Most studies do not describe the quality or nature of the involvement. Evolving processes of interaction that contribute to a child's development are usually ignored.

Past research on parent involvement has had at least three major limitations imposed by researchers:

(1) The meaning of parent involvement has been narrowly conceived;

(2) Data gathering has been almost exclusively quantitative; and

(3) Studies have been short-term.

Lightfoot (1983) points out that in effective schools research, appraisals are restricted to the effectiveness of instruction using standardized achievement tests. According to Lightfoot (1987), that particular research has neglected the voices, perspectives and wisdom of school people who typically judge schools by multidimensional constructs. Parents also judge child growth and development by such constructs.

Research describing parent involvement often uses scores from standardized achievement tests (Hayes & Grether, 1969). Parent involvement can not be adequately described, however, by such measures as percentage of time spent by parents in certain activities or by using standardized test scores as measures of student achievement. By contrast in the present research, voices of the parents, children and teachers help portray parent perceptions of parent involvement.

Citing a study by Smith (1968), Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes this "comparatively unknown investigation [using experimental intervention] by an unknown researcher [that] breaks new ground in ecological research on human development" (p. 226). He feels that in carrying out this study, Smith introduced significant changes in the prevailing relation between family and school in contemporary American society. He feels it "offers a prototype for research designs and experiments in the ecology of human development" (p. 230). Smith designed and carried out an ecologically valuable project, but the reporting did not do justice to the breadth of the developmental changes that occurred in the participants. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains the limitations:

> The imagination and comprehensiveness demonstrated in the planning of the experimental treatments were not matched in the selection of outcome measures. Results in quantitative form are limited to significant gains on tests of reading achievement and in parents' reactions to the program solicited in a questionnaire. (p. 230)

He further argues:

> Had the research included at least some data on the roles, activities, and relations exhibited by experimental and control subjects in the classroom setting and, perhaps even more significant, in the family and in the neighborhood peer group, the contribution of the study to both science and educational practice would have been immeasureably enhanced. (p. 230)

Smith's (1968) program of parent involvement can best be described as a "reorientation in established practice" in that she intervened to facilitate children's learning by involving parents in various ways. The present research describes and examines the ecological environment (roles, activities and relations) but is different in that it studies parent involvement as it occurs. The "experimental aspect" of the present research occurs naturally as children move into successive pre-existing school programs.

Context of the Study

This study stems from not only my interest as a professional educator but, also, my involvement as a parent with our daughter's and son's early childhood experiences. We had just chosen a Kindergarten program for our son. He was placed in French Immersion primarily because we felt he was bright and needed something different in terms of stimulation. Our daughter was attending the Merryland Cooperative Preschool program because friends, whose child had attended the program, convinced me that the teacher was excellent and the program superior to many other Preschool programs available in the community. The program requires that parents be directly involved as helpers. It also strongly encourages parental support; for example, approximately a third of the membership volunteer for positions such as field trip organizer and librarian. I found this decision hard to make and somewhat arbitrary because of a reliance on our friend's recommendations. When we were making decisions for our children, I would have liked to have had a better understanding of parent involvement as it relates to a child's schooling. I was, and still am, developing my knowledge and understanding about parental actions and attitudes that affect child development. Because of required parent participation it was decided that a study of parents involved in this program would ensure having respondents who had chosen to be considerably "involved" in their child's schooling, beginning when the child was very young.

Involvement with the Merryland Preschool Program influenced the shaping of the study. It afforded me firsthand knowledge of the program as practised. This knowledge helped determine the nature of the research questions. My association with the Co-op facilitated selection of the population for the study. However, my participation in the Co-op was not so extensive as to jeopardize my research position as an "optimally" distanced observer (Guba, 1980). I had interacted with the teacher on only a few occasions and with the parents minimally, or not at all, prior to requesting their participation. Responsibilities as a member, such as being a "helping parent" or attending parent meetings, were largely met by my husband.

I was quickly able to develop a rapport with children and parents. My involvement in the Preschool may have positively influenced parents to participate in the study and may have helped communicate my personal commitment to the research questions.

Because the nature of my involvement was in some ways similar to that of the parent respondents, care had to be taken to hear, analyze and interpret respondents' statements so as to properly represent what they intended. At the same time, the research methodology chosen--naturalistic interpretive--assumes that if an understanding of the researcher's perspective is made clear to the reader, interpretations will be understandable. Interpretations are necessarily and desirably influenced and determined by the researcher's world view.

The Researcher's Perspective

I have been a junior and senior high school Physical Education teacher, sometimes teaching in schools with a very large student population. I was bothered by what I perceived to be an impersonal learning environment. One reason I chose an Early Childhood specialization in my graduate studies was because I wanted to know more about the child-centred approach and the teaching philosophy upon which it is based.

I have always been interested in young children's understandings of what they are experiencing. My daughter's Kindergarten teacher, who respects "children as teachers," remarked that I have a nice approach (or way) with children. She may have been referring to my interactions with children in an intellectual sense (Eisner, 1983). My knowledge of this teacher's perspective on learning and teaching is limited, however, and leaves me feeling that I could learn a lot from what she has to offer. I want to gain the wealth of understanding of human relationships that I feel she possesses because she seems to have a deep understanding of relationships among living things.

I feel a fascination with the spontaneity, uniqueness, insightfulness and realness of child knowledge. I experience strong feelings when observing children and when I am a part of their actions in sharing that knowledge. I am a dreamer but I do care deeply. I am driven to "know."

I find myself questioning--particularly institutions. Faith plays a small part in my perspective on life. Thus, I come to this research through an apprehension about the schooling process. I ask myself, "Do I want home-schooling for my children?" As a parent of small children I reflect upon what schooling has done *to* me, acknowledging that it has also done things *for* me. But my real question is "What has it done to me?"

While in school I was not one of those who consciously felt trapped and who verbalized a hatred for school. Nor was I upset about what I was asked to do. I am, after all, from a middle class, schoolteacher family--the right "stuff" to ensure that I can flow within the system. During my schooling years I was very accepting. Everybody attended school and I was required to follow along. I feel

I developed a bad attitude toward learning because of the experience. In part, I blame those indoctrinating years for my constant battle against myself when I contemplate "learning."

A structuralist would say I am fighting the system. And so be it. My environment is cluttered with proponents of a stereotypic, middle class view of the "good" life. "You must strive to reach your potential." This potential, I believe, speaks more often of goals and objectives than it does of the route by which these are reached.

I continue to be propelled by a need to understand perspectives in the teaching/learning context. How does learning in young children proceed? How is it allowed and permitted to proceed? How do relationships and time invested affect learning? What part do parents of young children play in their child's learning both at home and at school?

Our young son and daughter are both loved and wanted. The nature of this feeling never changes in spite of fluctuations in all of our behaviour. Part of parenting is sometimes liking this behaviour and sometimes not; sometimes understanding it and sometimes not.

Life's demands affect the nurturing of the children's development, often working at cross purposes with educators' (including parents') attempts to provide meaningful experiences for our children. I feel responsible for knowing what is best for them and for trying to provide it. This desire to know is another one of the deciding factors that led me to choose Early Childhood Education as my focus in graduate studies.

As a parent it is difficult to achieve a balance between "rational" behaviour and action rooted in intuition, past experience and deep emotional attachment. This is the "tension" of parenting 24 hours a day, each day of the year--being stretched and/or relaxed at indeterminable times throughout life.

In some degree we, as parents, determine our children's participation in the institution of "school" and, indeed, the extent of our participation in their learning. We decide that schooling is part of that participation. I am apprehensive about my children attending school. Is it really a healthful environment in a social, emotional and intellectual sense? I question whether it deals in a healthy way with a child's (soon to be my child's) psychological development.

Our involvement in our children's schooling experiences occurs because of everything ranging from neglect (parents' a priori consideration of self) to genuine child-centred orientation on our part. For us, it seems that balancing child and adult needs is crucial when determining parenting action.

My studies, and this research in particular, are like one long practicum. There are no sabbaticals to study parenting or to develop the professional side of parenting. Throughout this four year "internship," the research focus remains the same: "What is parent involvement?"

Chapter II reviews the relevant literature. Chapter III presents the conceptual framework for the study and describes the study's methodological orientation. Chapter IV presents the research findings. Data from four families and corresponding teachers are organized by family and year. Perceptions of parent involvement are given for each of three years. First order interpretation is at an epistemological level. Chapter V addresses the longitudinal character of the study. The researcher attempts to clarify parent perceptions over time and to identify similarities and differences for parent and teacher. Chapter VI presents a discussion of the meaning of parent involvement. Meanings, motives and experiences for families are discussed. This chapter suggests implications of the research for educational practice and makes recommendations to guide practice and further research. The chapter concludes with the researcher reflecting on her role in the research process.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews relevant literature on parent involvement. The literature review is arranged into five categories: (1) parents as educators; (2) parenting; (3) intervention research; (4) research on aspects of parent involvement; and (5) meaning of parent involvement.

Parents as Educators

It is a common belief that parents are the first and most significant educators of children. They influence children's behaviour by directing and mediating their experiences. As Schaefer (1972) acknowledges from his survey of child development research, there is an increasing awareness of the parent as educator. Historically, however, this role sometimes has not been given the recognition it deserves. Toffler (1980) discusses the culturally prescribed reason for the minimal degree of prestige given to the job of parenting. He believes that if society was to provide mothers with financial remuneration for their efforts at mothering, the status of motherhood would increase significantly.

Parenting

The meaning of parenting is evolving. A variety of people and organizations including the YMCA, grandparents and community recreation associations, now share those tasks traditionally or stereotypically considered to be the responsibility of biological parents. Grams (cited in Swick, Duff & Hobson, 1981, p. 16) feels "the kind of parenting a child receives is the responsibility of the entire community and our objective must be to make all who wish to commit themselves to the task optimally effective."

Swick et al. (1981) support this notion. They write:

> The concept of parenting as it must emerge in the future should revolve around a team approach to child care which does not replace or inhibit the functioning of the main players (father, mother, children) but rather expands the option of human development through the involvement of others from the extended family, neighborhood and the community. (p. 15)

This shift in perspective on parenting emerges in response to socio-political changes such as ~~an~~ increase in divorce rate, single-parent families, and families with two full-time wage earners. These changes direct professionals who are ethically responsible for the welfare of children, to take action that protects and provides for healthy development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Elkind, 1986; Toffler, 1980). Bronfenbrenner (cited in Swick, Duff & Hobson, 1981, p. 19) advocates that we "begin to help children reach their full potential by forming a unified parenting team of mothers, fathers, siblings, child-care workers, educators, citizens, and other children."

Arrangements for the care of children and their education are changing. Parents feel justified in having children cared for in contempory ways because of a currently trendy conception of children. This concept is labelled by Elkind (1986) as a belief in the "competent infant." He convincingly argues that this perception of the child's capabilities is not supported by educational research. Nonetheless, arrangements for child learning, care and development are made on the basis of this false assumption. Parents may find it convenient to believe in the concept of the "competent infant" because this allows them to not only justify their actions affecting children but, also, seek or maintain their own interests.

Schaefer (1972) states that, ideally, "professional education" should provide support for family education of the child with schools being "necessary but not sufficient" for the child's education. Current trends seem to indicate that many children will not experience the traditional family. Although the concept of family may undergo change, it will likely still be the basis for the child's education. Emerging support groups and individuals can strengthen what is already established by those with whom the child is in a close personal relationship--"family." These will be the "educative environments" that Lightfoot

(1978) refers to when she remarks, "In order to fully capture family-school interactions, families need to be seen as educative environments" (p. 2).

Intervention Research

Many studies of early intervention programs reveal that when the family is not involved in the learning process, cognitive gains made by children are lost soon after the child is no longer in the program (Biber, 1970; Honig, 1975).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) draws attention to a study by Hayes and Grether (1969) where these researchers analyzed achievement test scores for several thousand students enrolled in grades two through six of the New York City school system. Whereas most investigators assess academic gains by looking at changes in performance that occur between fall and spring, Hayes and Grether also looked at the interval from spring to fall. They were interested in what happened during the summer. They concluded:

> The substantial difference in academic achievement across social class and race found by the end of the sixth grade is not attributable to what goes on in school, most of it comes from what goes on out of school. (Hayes and Grether cited in Bronfenbrenner, pp. 225-226)

Bronfenbrenner uses this finding to support the statement that "a key to the enhanced effectiveness of public education lies not within the school itself but in its interconnections with other settings in the society" (p. 226).

Research on Aspects of Parent Involvement

After studying research on parent involvement, Fullan (1982) concludes that most parents' concerns for programs, and changes in programs, that their children presently experience are more intense and of greater importance than programs with which their children are not currently associated. Involvement in school or system-wide advisory councils is not meaningful for most parents.

Fullan (1982) cites three studies of parent advisory councils. First he cites Fantini (1980) who reviewed "research on governance forms of involvement" in which there was no direct evidence to confirm or reject basic theories concerning the impacts on children whose parents were involved in decision-making. He did find evidence of benefits to parents who participated. Second, Fullan cites Paddock's (1979) study of parents' participation as decision-makers on advisory councils in which Paddock reported school principal domination of decisions and information. Third, the School-Commmunity Relations Group at the University of Wisconsin (Madison) conducted a series of case studies in four very different settings (rural, urban, elementary, secondary), selecting subjects across social classes. These researchers found almost no correlation between the amount of parent participation on advisory councils and student achievement. The researchers did not examine parent involvement in instructional activities.

Lightfoot (1978) presents convincing arguments for shared environments as a part of parent involvement. She seems to be saying that the sharing of knowledge concerning the child's experiences in a particular setting (shared environment) will help the schoolteacher and parent in their respective roles as facilitators of the child's education. Her descriptions support the idea that the teacher has much to gain from home visits including a better understanding of where the child is "coming from." Lightfoot's perspective on parent involvement supports the practice of allowing parents' to be present in the classroom because the parent will "know" the child's experience at school in a different way when she experiences it firsthand. Lightfoot writes:

> In order to effectively attend to children in one setting, the adult sponsors would have to be aware of life in the other [setting], see the child's experience as continuous, and seek an integration of educational realms. (p. 2)

Becker (cited in Fullan, 1982, p. 206) completed a study in Maryland concerning the extent to which teachers encouraged and initiated "parental involvement at home in instructional matters." He found that 75% of teachers "believed that parent involvement at home was necessary for achieving educational goals for students, but 'many teachers do not know how to initiate and accomplish their programs of parent involvement that would help them [teachers] most (p. 8)'." Becker also determined that those teachers who conducted parent workshops were the ones actively emphasizing the parents' teaching role at home.

In his summary of 3700 elementary school teachers in Maryland, Becker (cited in Fullan, 1982, p. 206) found that "those teachers who were more active users of parent-involvement-at-home techniques were also more likely to involve parents in the classroom as volunteers, aids or observers." Becker's analysis suggests four possible reasons why teachers, in principle, support the idea of having parents more involved, but do not initiate actions to effect it.

1. They did not know how to go about it.
2. They perceived parents as not interested in becoming involved.
3. They did not take the time to develop a program.
4. They felt that parents could not make a worthwhile contribution to their child's education. (Fullan, 1982, p. 206)

Having examined the research on parent involvement, Fullan (1982) believes that parents are interested in being involved. He writes:

> Given their interest, given its potential impact on student learning, and given the fact that this vast resource is largely untapped for educational purposes, it is a crying shame there are so many barriers to parent involvement. But then again, neither the barriers nor the potential has been

> properly recognized and worked on in most schools and communities. (p. 203)

Several studies have found that parent involvement in instruction is beneficial. As Fullan (1982) points out, the importance of the connection between home and school is recently being given more frequent consideration:

> There are many, many more effective parent involvement programs in operation than was the case a decade ago. There has been a social movement beyond the rhetoric of general endorsement or rejection of community involvement, toward the development and use of specific programs involving parents in the classroom or at home in instructional activities. These forms of involvement have become purposeful and meaningful at the individual level. . . .Some of the phenomenological barriers have been overcome through interaction. Some of the logistical problems have been addressed through the development of more and better curriculum activities specifically designed to include parents. (pp. 210-211)

The Meaning of Parent Involvement

Pain (1984) carried out a study for the Early Childhood Services (ECS) Branch of Alberta Education "to identify and describe the role of parents in the delivery of ECS programs" (p. 1). The findings identify and describe the role played by these parents while participating in activities with a class or in the school. However, the meaning of parent involvement is likely much broader than implied here. For example, parents play a part in the delivery of ECS programs by attending to aspects of involvement not identified in Pain's study such as attending to the child's nutritional and physiological needs, fostering a love for learning and life, and supporting the child as a unique and valued young citizen.

It appears from Pain's (1984) research that the conception of parent involvement portrayed is based upon a set of assumptions that underlies present day mythology on involvement. Swick et al. (1981) identify five myths of parent involvement that support the need to illuminate and question taken-for-granted assumptions (pp. 21-23).

> 1. Involved parents must be physically active in school activities on a continuous basis.

The authors feel that this activity does not reflect the "comprehensiveness of parenting."

> 2. Parent education programs can be most effective when designed by specialists in education and/or child development.

These authors argue that the most effective programs are designed by parents, teachers and other personnel in a cooperative manner.

> 3. Working parents are less apt to be involved in school activities because of their work schedules.

The authors believe that many parents who work outside the home are very sensitive in how they spend their family time. They take a special interest in their children's school activities. The other part of the myth is that parents who are at home do not work.

> 4. Many parent involvement programs falter because of lack of parental interest.

The authors claim that diversified programs scheduled around the lives of the parents prove to be successful.

5. In order to have an effective parent involvement program, the school must have a parent program coordinator.

In support of this final myth, Colleta (cited in Swick et al., 1981) reported "the parent-teacher team can . . . be effective, providing they have clearly defined goals and are willing to share the responsibilities of implementing the program."

Everett-Turner (1986) advocates conscious attention to this broader conception of parent involvement. She states:

> To many, "parent involvement" conjures up visons of parents going on field trips, laminating word cards, and organizing bake sales. While this is part of parent involvement, there is really much more. Everything parents do with their children affects their general education. As educators, we are responsible for children's education for only a few hours each day. Therefore, it is imperative that we work together as partners with parents to ensure that all children experience an optimal education. (p. 19)

In a study by Smith (1968), a broad conception of parent involvement is envisaged in the planning stage. The design and implementation of the program are exemplary in this regard. The numerous activities, procedures, meetings and follow-up activities carried out in the program initiate and encourage a myriad of possible contexts for parent involvement. A broad meaning for parent involvement is evident in the stated purposes of the program.

> First, it restores to the family its rightful responsibility for teaching the child. Second, it gives the family pride in being the teacher. Third, it brings together the child's "significant others"--the parent and the teacher--as partners, not competititors or strangers, in the child's learning process. Neither can do this job in opposition to the other or in isolation. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 226-227)

These goals clearly illuminate a comprehensive, understanding of parent involvement. Bronfenbrenner's way of looking at people's existence in the environment helps one understand what parent involvement means.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework for examining human development can act as a "blueprint" for constructing an ecologically valid psychology of development. He defines ecology of human development in this way:

> The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (p. 31)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines ecological validity as the extent to which the environment experienced by the subjects in a scientific investigation has the properties it is supposed, or assumed to have by the investigator. He realizes that total ecological validity will never be fully realized.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concepts of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem form the basis of his theoretical model of human development. These systems describe the activities, roles and relationships experienced by a developing person within and between contexts such as home, school, neighbourhood and work. The systems form a basis for making understandable what the present researcher observed.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines microsystem to mean a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by a developing person in a given setting that has particular physical and material characteristics. A mesosystem is the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates. For example, the relations between home and neighbourhood peer group constitute a mesosystem for a child. Bronfenbrenner defines an exosystem as one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by what happens in the setting containing the developing person. The macrosystem represents consistencies in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework helps to make data collected in the present study understandable. Elaboration of this framework is given in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The first part of this chapter presents Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework as a context for the present study. The second part of the chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study.

Ecology of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model is used as a conceptual framework for understanding parents' perceptions of their involvement in the child's learning experiences. Analysis and interpretation are carried out with Bronfenbrenner's theoretical perspective in mind. While Smith (1968) employed a different methodology and analytical framework, her study also reflects Bronfenbrenner's perspective. Informal "research" is done this way by many teachers: both schoolteachers and parents. In the realm of recorded and/or "scholarly" research, Bronfenbrenner's proposed orientation is innovative.

In the present study, the ecological systems in place for each child's development are "disturbed" because the children experience different school and community programs in each of the three years of the study. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), it is when normal development is "disturbed" that one can best study it:

> The relation between person and environment has the properties of a system with a momentum of its own; the only way to discover the nature of this inertia is to try to disturb the existing equilibrium. (p. 37)

In the present study, the child's microsystems are described. The analysis focuses on perceptions of different participants: child, parent and schoolteacher. The home-school mesosytem, established when the child moves into a school setting, is a major focus in this study. Changes in mesosystems for particular families are described in Chapter V. Bronfenbrenner (1979) feels "interconnections (mesosytem) can be as decisive for [human] development as events taking place within a given setting" (p. 3). He states:

> The capacity of a setting--such as the home, school, or workplace--to function effectively as a context for development is seen to depend on the existence and nature of social interconnections between settings, including joint participation, communication and the existence of information in each setting about the other (pp. 5-6)

The exosystem is decribed only minimally in the present research while the macrosystem is given greater attention, particularly in the discussion of implications in Chapter VI.

Developmental Nature of Bronfenbrenner's Theory

The ecological orientation is developmental in nature. It concerns itself with "the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment and his relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 9). This theory emphasizes the "evolving nature and scope of perceived reality as it emerges and expands in the child's [learner's] awareness and in his active involvement with the physical and social environment" (Bronfenbrenner, p. 9).

Both child and adult perceptions of involvement can be described with reference to systems. By using parent, teacher and child descriptions of activities, roles and relations, the researcher can better understand parent involvement.

For Bronfenbrenner (1979), development-in-context is the primary concern. He is aware that genetic propensity plays an important contextual role but, for the present, is being ignored. The purpose of his theoretical orientation is the development of an adequate framework for analyzing the "environmental side" of the equation.

In this study, the focus is on parent's action knowledge (Barnes, 1975) as it relates to parenting and parent involvement. This is practical information that can be assimilated and applied in context. This study discusses factors that contribute to parents' perceptions of their involvement with their child's learning experiences that come from outside the immediate setting. It provides insights into different personal understandings. It also raises questions and suggests domains for future investigations. Therefore, this research is exploratory.

The Phenomenological Element

Phenomenology is a philosophy of the personal and the individual that is understood to stand within a communal context--a whole that can be measured, interpreted and described. It is an attitude of everyday life--original, pre-reflective and pre-theoretical. As such, it has a uniqueness for each individual.

Winograd and Flores (1986) state that phenomenology is the "examination of the foundations of experience and action" that "emphasizes those areas of human experience where individual interpretation and human understanding . . . play a central role" (p. 9). To illuminate the phenomenological element in this study the researcher keeps in mind, and applies when appropriate, basic premises of Lewin's (cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 23-24) explicit, systematic theory of "topological pyschology."

According to Lewin's theory, before a person reflects upon his experiences, the environment has a greater effect on the person's subsequent behaviour than does his meaning given to the experience through analysis and interpretation. Because people hold different perspectives, the particular meaning the individual gives to the setting must be known in order to understand that person's behaviour. Objects and events experienced directly, as well as what is imagined, have a strong influence on behaviour.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) iterates that an ecological orientation "takes seriously and translates into operational terms" both psychological and sociological references to environmental context--"what matters for behavior and development is the environment as it is perceived rather than as it may exist in 'objective' reality" (p. 4). Knowledge of parent and teacher perspectives allow for better understanding of perceptions of parent involvement in the child's learning.

The study emphasizes content--"what is perceived, desired, feared, thought about, or acquired as knowledge and how the nature of this psychological material changes as a function of a person's exposure to and interaction with the environment" (p. 9). Differing social backgrounds and experiences will affect the meanings of settings for participants.

Method

This section of the chapter describes the design of the study and the instrumentation used. It describes the procedures used to (1) obtain the sample of parents, (2) pilot the instruments with children and teachers, (3) actually carry out the study and (4) analyze the data.

Research Design

This is a "naturalistic interpretive," longitudinal study in which the main purpose is to understand the meaning of parent involvement. According to Guba (1980), a naturalistic study is a paradigm for research but is not a method by which to conduct the research. This type of study is not grounded in theory as such. Rather "theory emerge[s] from the data" (Guba, p. 6); that is, theory is grounded in the data. Guba identifies four criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic studies. He indicates that naturalistic research may be considered trustworthy when it achieves an appropriate measure of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These help to give the findings increased plausibility, reliability and freedom from researcher bias.

The researcher seeks an understanding of parent involvement through an interpretation of perceptions provided by parents and teachers during in-depth interviews and from detailed questionnaires. In addition, children were observed and interviewed. Perceptions for ten families and twelve teachers were gathered. Descriptions for four families and six teachers form the basis for the findings in this thesis. Interpretive data are presented in Chapter IV and discussed in a longitudinal context in Chapter V. In reporting the data, the researcher has used pseudonyms for all participants, institutions, associations and locations.

Sample

Parents of children in the Merryland Preschool class who would be attending Kindergarten in the fall were approached and asked to participate in the present study. The researcher handed to ten parents letters explaining the research project. By telephone she asked if they would be part of the study. At this time, six parents agreed to participate. The researcher arranged for the initial evening interview. Letters were handed to another ten parents and the same procedure was repeated until four additional parents had volunteered.

The decision to have ten families involved was to ensure a large enough sample in the event that volunteers withdrew from the study before it was completed. All ten, two-parent families participated in each of the three years.

The following characteristics generally describe families in the sample. In nine of the families, the mother does not work for monetary gain outside the home. The children in all but one of the families are the biological offspring of both parents. In one family, the father's job did not appear to be secure. At the beginning of the study each family has a child who is either four or five years old. The child has completed at least one year of a Cooperative Preschool experience at the time of the initial data collection and is entering Kindergarten in the fall.

In 1983, parents chose to have their children attend the Merryland Cooperative Preschool program either on Tuesday and Thursday mornings or for one, two or three days on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. In 1985 and 1986, the ten children are enrolled in Kindergarten and Grade One programs in seven different schools. All children attend Grade One at the school where they attended Kindergarten. (See Figure 1, p. 45 .)

Pilot

The researcher piloted all data collection instruments. She gained the cooperation of three parents and their children who were participating in an early childhood program at the University Child Centre. The researcher conducted interviews with parents and children in their homes and with the teacher at the Child Centre. Slight changes in wording were made in the interview questions. As a result of piloting the parent questionnaire, the researcher increased the amount of space for responses to individual questions. The researcher piloted the "written description" portion of the questionnaire with four colleagues. Based upon the content of these descriptions the researcher determined the instructions to be understandable and meaningful.

Instrumentation

Interview Guides

The researcher conducted semi-structured, audiotaped interviews with parents, children and teachers. She prepared three interview guides--one each for parents, children and teachers. Questions were chosen to reflect the main purpose of the study, the focus of the study and the principal research questions outlined in Chapter I.

The choice of questions for all interviews encouraged open-ended discussion and exploration of issues. Each question was designed to elicit reasons; to get at underlying interests and motives as they relate to parent involvement. For parent interviews (see Appendix II), the researcher modified the questioning strategy a little in the second and third years in order to focus on the longitudinal character of the study and changing perceptions over time.

The focus for the teacher interviews (see Appendix III) was teacher perceptions of both parent involvement and teaching and learning. The questioning strategy for the children (see Appendix IV) was to elicit from them descriptions of their involvement with parents.

Observations

In each year the researcher made detailed notes in each of the program environments. She observed each child twice in each classroom setting. In the first year descriptive notes were taken with regard to the following: location of activity centres, resource materials available, teacher's interactions with parents and children, teacher's daily routine, and activity of parent helpers including their interaction with children. In the following two years detailed notes focused on the child's activities and interactions within the program environment.

Questionnaire

The researcher requested that parents in each of the ten families complete a detailed questionnaire (see Appendix I). The purpose of the questionnaire was to complement information acquired through interviews and to provide detail for describing the child's learning environment.

Data Collection

The researcher collected observational and interview data in the spring of years, 1984, 1985 and 1986. In the first year she interviewed ten children in their homes. In the following two years, the ten children were interviewed in a total of 14 different program environments. Parents were interviewed in their homes. The data collection techniques included audiotaped interviews, questionnaire and observation notes. The same Questionnaire (Appendix I), Parent Interview Guideline (Appendix II) and Teacher Interview Guideline (Appendix III) were used each year.

Data collection strategies are outlined below for each year.

Preschool Year

The researcher conducted two evening interviews with each pair of parents. At the time of the first interview, the researcher discussed the Questionnaire with the mother and father. The Questionnaire was to be completed within a week. The researcher collected Questionnaires before conducting the second evening interview. During the day, the researcher made a third visit to each home at which time she interviewed the mother and child separately, except on three occasions when mother and child were together.

Child interviews that involved the researcher talking with two children in a room outside the program setting were attempted at the school but abandoned because the researcher felt the children were uncomfortable. Children were questionned at home usually with the mother present.

The teacher was interviewed in the classroom. Program descriptions were constructed from notes made by the researcher while observing on four consecutive days.

Kindergarten Year

The researcher conducted one evening interview with each set of parents. In one instance the father was not available. As in the Preschool year, parents were instructed to complete the Questionnaire. Eight of ten questionnaires were completed and returned.

Child interviews were conducted at the school. The researcher set up an activity for a group of three or four students. In six instances there was only one child in the group who was a participant in the study. In two instances there were two. The activity was audiotaped. Children were directed to make a book (see Chapter IV, Grade One Year for each family). They were to include in the book things they could remember doing at home, at school or at other places. They were asked to tell about what their mother or father had to do with the activities visualized for representation in the books. They made drawings with felt pens and then talked about them so that words could be added to tell the story. The researcher added words to go along with the children's drawings on the basis of children's conversations while working on the books and explanations given by the children.

The researcher attended two consecutive days in each of the seven Kindergarten programs to observe the children in their classroom environments. Observational notes were made paying particular attention to interactions.

Interviews were conducted in classrooms with each of the seven teachers.

Grade One Year

The researcher conducted one evening interview with each set of parents. In two instances the father was not available. As in previous years, parents were instructed to complete the Questionnaire. All ten questionnaires were completed and returned. Child interviews were conducted at the school according to the procedure outlined in the Kindergarten year.

In this year of the study some complications arose in terms of data collection. The teacher of one Grade One class had two major illnesses and long-term substitute teachers were hired. Another teacher had a lengthy absence for which a long-term substitute was hired. In the first instance, the classroom teacher had just come back to teach at the time of data collection. In the second instance, the substitute teacher was handling the class. In a third instance, the teacher was absent during the week the researcher conducted the classroom observation. These are all natural occurrences as experienced by child and parents and, therefore, are authentic data.

All questionnaires were completed. Responses from the children were collected in the same way as it had been done in the Kindergarten year. The researcher attended two consecutive days in each of the seven Grade One programs. Interviews were conducted with seven teachers.

Validity

In an interpretive study, validity is a condition where, once all the relevant evidence is considered, the interpretation is internally consistent. The participants agree that they can understand the situation in the way that it is described. The account requires participant confirmation as a check on purposes, meanings, intentionality of statements made to ensure they are those of the participant. "To be valid, an interpretive account must . . . be coherent: it must comprehend and coordinate insights and evidence within a consistent framework" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 91).

Because data are collected in a variety of ways from children, teachers and parents, triangulation (Guba, 1980) is possible. Teacher, parent and child interview responses may be compared with each other and with observation and questionnaire data. Guba argues that triangulation increases the credibility and confirmability of the data. Interview transcriptions were returned to respondents for confirmation of the purpose, meaning and intentionality of statements made. Data to provide "thick" descriptions of contexts was available because the completed questionnaires provided extensive information concerning the nature of the parents' role in creating their child's learning environment.

Analysis of the Data

The researcher chose to present data from four of the ten families to provide the reader with greater depth. The researcher believes that a more complete perspective of parent involvement emerges with such thick description. The researcher chose the families so as to best display the diversity and variation presented in the data.

The researcher grouped the families on the basis of decisions made about which school was best for the child entering Kindergarten. One group chose French Immersion. The main consideration for another group was that the school was in the neighbourhood. The third group chose the school in which the Merryland Preschool was housed even though this decision required arranging transportation in two of the three cases. In the third case, there was a history of transporting other children in the family in order to have them in a "good" school.

From each of these groups of families the researcher chose one family on which to focus the discussion. She chose one family where the child was the eldest, one where the child was the youngest and one where the child was a middle child. The families have two, three, and four children. Taking all three years into account, the class sizes range from nine in one Kindergarten class to 28 in another Kindergarten. The researcher included data from a fourth family to provide an overall balance of teacher and parent data reported in this study. Thus, the data analyzed from four families may be considered a fair representation of the scope and quality of perceptions, decisions and judgements from all ten families.

Once interviews were transcribed, the researcher provided respondents with text for validation as to accuracy and intent. The researcher then selected and organized data by families and years. She began by describing a morning at the Merryland Cooperative Preschool program. This is followed by a detailed description of the Preschool teacher's perspective with particular attention to her background as it relates to her teaching position and her perspective of teaching and learning theory, and her perceptions of parent involvement. Themes emerging from the data are identified in order to succinctly describe teacher understandings. Descriptions specific to each family for the three-year period are presented next. Again, attention is given to parents' and teachers' perspectives of teaching and learning, and perceptions of parent involvement. Interpretations of interview and questionnaire data are organized according to contexts that determine (and are determined by) the nature of parents' involvement with their child.

A longitudinal analysis of parent involvement with reference to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework is given in Chapter V. An ontological level of meaning for parent involvement is discussed in Chapter VI.

Generalizability

To the extent that the reader can identify with the explanations and conclusions suggested in the analysis, generalizability is achieved. If those perspectives revealed in the study are familiar to the reader; that is, are consistent with the reader's own experience and world view, then the findings may be treated seriously. If there is movement, then, from general to particular and back again, generalization has taken place (Denton, 1974). This means that the reader can extract specifics from the present research and link them to general considerations. If the reader can apply themes from participants' perceptions of parent involvement to help make sense of his own situation, then generalization has taken place.

Definition of Terms

Parent Involvement - For purposes of this study, the meaning of parent involvement is not specifically defined. The meaning of involvement emerges from an examination of parents' perceptions of involvement in their child's learning experiences. The meaning is derived from interpretations of those perceptions given by parents, schoolteachers, children and researcher. As the study chose to focus on the child's early schooling years, this tended to limit perceptions to those relevant to educational settings.

Perception - Impressions, feelings, mental images and ideas about aspects of reality such as parent involvement.

Perspective - A world view derived from many perceptions and reflecting a person's underlying assumptions, motivation, intentionality and interest. It allows one to understand or make sense of some aspect of reality.

Shared Environment - Knowledge shared by individuals in different microsystems. Knowledge can be obtained by common experience or through one- and two-way communication from one microsystem to another.

CHAPTER IV

INTERVIEW, QUESTIONNAIRE AND OBSERVATION DATA

Introduction

This chapter begins with a description of the Merryland Preschool program followed by a detailed account of the Preschool teacher's perceptions of parent involvement and educational practice.

Perceptions of parents, child and teacher for each of four families for each year of the study are then described. The children's learning environments are described for each year. Parent involvement is examined and described with reference to (1) the attitude and actions of the child, (2) the attitudes and actions of significant others, (3) cultural expectations and (4) the schoolteacher's philosophy and actions. Parents' perceptions reflect participants' beliefs, interests, intentions and motives.

Descriptions of the children are formulated from teacher interviews, parent interviews, child interviews, observations and questionnaire data. A summary of perceptions and perspective is provided for each family.

In order to guide the reader, each block quotation is documented with symbols that indicate the month, year, data gathering technique and family name. The following is a list of symbols used with their meanings:

PI - parent interview
TI - teacher interview
CI - child interview
Q - questionnaire
PO - program observation
A - Adams family
B - Blaine family
E - Emmerson family
G - Gordon family

As a further assist to the reader, the main players in this study are presented in a matrix (see Figure 1) together with schools attended in each of the three years.

All Families - Preschool Program

Merryland Preschool Program Environment

The Merryland Cooperative Preschool program operates five mornings a week from 9:30 to 11:30 from September through May. Children attend one, two or three mornings a week. A public school classroom is rented for the program. Centers are set up including a painting area, block area, library and story corner, a crafts and snack table, water table, sand box, a work bench, housekeeping area and a corner for puzzles and games. The teacher establishes a

Preschool Program	MERRYLAND (REDWOOD SCHOOL)			
Preschool Teacher	Mrs. Karen Oliver			
Family:	Gordon	Blaine	Emmerson	Adams
Child:	Julie	Andrew	Matthew	Dianna
Father:	Dan	Carl	Bob	Hugh
Mother:	Patricia	Lois	Ruth	Irene
Kindergarten & Grade One Schools:	OAKLAND	BLUE LAKE	REDWOOD	
Kindergarten Teacher:	Mrs. Leighton	Mme. Zarek	Mrs. Louise Kruger	
Grade One Teacher:	Mrs. Leighton	Mme. Marceau	Mrs. Gwen Elliot	

Figure 1. Matrix showing names of family members, schools and teachers described in the study.

weekly theme; for example, circles. Activities in centers are set up to encourage conversation and experiences that will develop or reinforce the children's conception of circle. Adult encouragement, questionning and/or assistance is available to children. With a four to one ratio of adults to children, immediate attention or response is always available. Children are active alone, in small groups, and under the teacher's direction in whole group activities at different times each session. Parents are free to come and go as they choose. A bulletin board provides information applicable to parenting; for example, children's program offerings through the public library and the college (music).

One Morning Session

"Good morning." Mrs. Oliver, the teacher, greets us as my daughter, Patty and I come through the door of the classroom. We return the greeting. Patty has a stuffed "Snoopy" dog complete with yellow rain hat and coat. Having run into the school to escape the driving rain, we take off our dripping coats and prepare to find out what this space has to offer us.

"Patty, I'm glad you put a raincoat on Snoopy when you brought him out today. Then he won't catch a cold," remarks Mrs. Oliver.

It is 8:45 and Rachael is sitting with her son, Billy, in the "block area" talking with him about a farm display.

He explains what is happening in the scene. The background has been painted by an adult. The children have made the trees, barns and horses.

Ian and his mother arrive. Mrs. Oliver asks, "Are you the helping mom today?"

Shirley comments, "No." She motions with her fingers to represent walking. She continues, "About nine o'clock I'll go, but can I help?"

Mrs. Oliver frowns. "I think you're being taken advantage of. Helping moms must see that if they're not here, things go badly."

Over the next half hour parents come and go, staying in the room for different lengths of time. The helping mother arrives about nine o'clock. Two mothers look over the posted list of names of people elected to the executive for the upcoming year. Another mother unexpectedly leaves cupcakes with the teacher to celebrate her daughter's birthday. People from a television network arrive to do audiotapings for a Mother's Day program. Dr. Meredith steps in to speak to the teacher about research he is conducting individually with children outside the program time.

At 9:30 there are seven adults and fourteen children in the classroom. Five children go out with the television people. Four children have gone to the washroom with the college practicum student and five are in the room. Three children use paint and brushes available on the craft table to "make something beautiful for your mom for Mother's Day." Big pieces of paper, big brushes and rich colors of paint allow for relaxed exploration. They "produce" flowers, people, houses and designs. One child is using a variety of cutters available to make shapes with play dough. Another child creates an imaginary scenario for himself as he plays with the Fisher Price Farm set.

I sense some feelings of controlled tensions in the teacher, parents and children because of "many interesting things happening." Concern for spontaneous organization, and necessary adjustments to it, produces detectable "nervous energy." Mrs. Oliver predicted this would be an unusually busy morning.

After the morning's initial organization is completed, Mrs. Oliver proceeds with a recognizable routine. This includes time for each child to choose an area of interest in which to play, gym time, snack time and "Show and Tell." The morning culminates with the teacher reading a story to the children.

The first two mothers to arrive before class are the first two back at the end. They enter the room at 11:15. The children's paintings are up on the walls. At 11:25 Charlie's mother arrives. Charlie runs from the story corner to shout "Hi!" to his mother. Other mothers arrive.

Children, mothers and teacher intermingle and converse as they get ready to leave.

Mrs. Oliver's Perspective

Mrs. Oliver (known to parents as Karen) is the Preschool teacher. She has taught in the primary grades but prefers teaching in this cooperative Preschool program to teaching in the Public School system. She has been the teacher in the Merryland Preschool for five years. In her mind she relates well to this particular age group and enjoys the freedom afforded her.

> I wasn't bound by course outlines and deadlines and paperwork and I had a tremendous amount of freedom to develop a program which I felt would be good for the children. (May.84.TI)

She believes that in her five years as teacher in this Preschool program, there has been an evolution of attitudes toward Preschool, such that they are now considered to be places "where children can learn while they're playing." She would like to see Preschools become part of the school system.

This teacher cites both her formal training and her experience in parenting four children as helping her as teacher in the Preschool program. "It gave me some insights [and] sympathy for parents for their problems" (May.84.TI.G).

It seems that Mrs. Oliver feels a moral responsibility to "deliver" knowledge and skills to parents, children and others. For example, she is compelled to interpret behaviour and suggest actions that would promote desirable or healthy behaviour. Moral and professional may be one and the same in this instance.

> [I'm responsible] to have a background and understanding and explanation if parents question why I do something. And that's where I fall back on my University and life experience I guess. And responsibility for stretching [parent] minds. Like there was a TV, on-the-street interview . . . asking people from all ages and all walks of life, "What age do babies begin to see and hear?" And the answers ranged from six weeks to six months. They must have asked ten people and there wasn't one that knew. Babies can hear before they're born and can see from the time they're born. And so we [professional educators] have a lot of educating to do. (May.84.TI)

When Mrs. Oliver explains her objectives she is emphatic about her first priority.

> The most important thing is socializing; to teach children how to get along with each other [and] to work together as a group, having a feeling of responsiblity for each other. (May.84.TI)

In conjunction with a television network production, Mrs. Oliver arranges for a Mother's Day activity that is aimed at developing a caring attitude. Children's wishes to their mothers are audiotaped and televised as program shorts at regular intervals during Mother's Day. Children's paintings are also shown.

An awareness of the means for facilitating cognitive development seems to be apparent.

> [Samuel] really enjoys something that's a challenge intellectually. Numbers with detail. Finding difference. How things work. Books about what makes weather. . . .He is very "thoughtful." (May.84.TI)

Mrs. Oliver promotes the development of symbolic representation when extending the play of Matthew and Paul. Matthew refers to a construction made from the big cardboard "bricks" and comments, "This is a Space Ship." Mrs. Oliver asks, "Could I make a sign so others would know? What's the beginning sound? Can someone help write that?" Paul writes with the teacher guiding his hand (May.84.PO).

Mrs. Oliver demonstrates that she respects the uniqueness of each child as she greets each one with a comment that reflects her awareness of the child's "moment." This attitude is reaffirmed when she states that "Each child will get something different out of the program."

Mrs. Oliver is a proponent of early childhood research. Dr. Meredith is carrying on a study to do with early acquisition of Math skills. He is using a few of the children as subjects for the study. Mrs. Oliver's feelings are reflected in the following statement:

> Certainly the more research that people do into young children, the more evidence that these are the most important years: between zero and six. (May.84.TI)

Mrs. Oliver recognizes that when parents brings a three year old to a Preschool program, they know the child far better than she does. However, as children near the end of one or two years in the program, she shows awareness of the temperament, style, skills, and uniqueness of each child.

When describing children Mrs. Oliver relies upon apparent differences in her experiences with them. For example, her description of Andrew seems to come more from visualization of an experience with him in the context of home life rather than school life.

> I've worked with him on a one to one basis for a whole Saturday and we were playing games where he was telling me the rules when I wasn't sure that that could possibly be right. I know he couldn't read all the rules but he had them memorized from playing with his older brother and he told me which one. And they were complicated rules. I had an insight into what he was capable of. Much more than he did in his play. (May.84.TI)

Descriptions of other children seem always to be based on visualizations of observations and interactions with children in the program environment. When the researcher speaks of home visits, the teacher acknowledges that "You've probably pinpointed a lack in our program . . . a weakness." But she would not do visits right at the beginning of the program because of "a bit of wanting to start fresh with just that child and mother and be able to observe and get to know them and then move out and visit."

Mrs. Oliver clearly indicates that she sees herself as being a teacher of parents. "In the context of a Parent Co-op . . . I feel I am not only teaching children, but parents." She speaks about this both in terms of the parent learning about children and in terms of parents' right of access to knowledge and understanding of school proceedings. She states:

> It is an opportunity for [parents] to compare ideas and children and to be exposed to what children are capable of, what's good for children, what's not so good, what's important and what's less important.
>
> I think that's [a] wonderful opportunity in a Preschool Program . . . to educate parents to feel comfortable, to make them welcome and to have the expectation that that's their school. (May.84.TI)

The four to one, child-teacher ratio in this program requires that arrangements be made for three parent helpers to be present most days. For field trips, the teacher strongly encourages a one on one situation. The stated purpose for parent involvement is to ensure the operation of the program as the teacher would like it.

There are less explicit reasons for involvement. Parent-teacher contact is important because it allows Mrs. Oliver to be a teacher of parents. It brings parents together. It allows Mrs. Oliver to observe parents and share ideas of parenting with them.

Mrs. Oliver sees education as a "team effort." Presumably, the team is parents and teacher. Her actions and procedures seem to indicate that she takes on the role of "coach" within the context of the program itself.

She has a concern for control. Not only is it expected of her in this job but, also, it is what she believes is best for the children. For example, when the college student sits down with the children and starts to do a painting, the teacher tells her quietly not to do one because the children will copy or look for what is "right."

For Mrs. Oliver, an "open-door" policy seems to mean that parents should have right of access to knowledge and understanding of school proceedings. She relates:

> My own personal bias is that when [classroom] doors are closed, then teachers are not comfortable with what they're doing. . . .They should be very comfortable with anybody coming in, other than disturbing a class, but visitors should be welcome. Especially parents. After all, we're the tax payers. I'm speaking now as a parent. . . .In my own experience . . . it was increasingly difficult to be involved as a parent. It was very accessible up to the end of elementary but . . . by the time they got to High School it was a very negative feeling. Even the children reflected it. They didn't want you there. A parent in a High School meant they were in trouble. For your own children's sake, you didn't appear. . . .That's sad I think. (May.84.TI)

Mrs. Oliver believes "there are isolated cases where children are abused--if not physically, verbally." She goes on to suggest that "if there was some strong parent involvement, they probably couldn't develop" (May.84.TI).

Summary - Mrs. Oliver's Perspective

Mrs. Oliver is a devoted professional educator. For the children in the program she has a primary objective of providing development of social skills; socialization. The program she presents, and her interactions with the children in particular, facilitate healthy cognitive and affective development. She feels she draws not only on her formal training to teach in this Preschool program but, equally important, her experience in parenting four children.

Mrs. Oliver realizes that a parent who brings a three or four year old child to the Preschool program knows the child much better than she does. She sees herself as much a teacher of parents as a teacher of children. Parent helpers are important for this reason as well as the explicit reason of maintaining a suitable ratio of adults to children. The teacher wishes to make the program a teaching situation rather than a "babysitting" service. She advocates a "team effort" but wants to maintain control in the context of the Preschool program.

Occasional interaction with children in their homes (shared environments) influences assessment of those children's capabilities. She believes parents must have first-hand knowledge of their child's schooling experiences because they are advocates of their child. Her support of the need for parents to act as advocates for their children seems to come from her perspective as a parent.

The Gordon Family - Preschool Year

Julie

At the end of the Preschool year Julie is five years old. She has brothers who are three (Jordan) and nine years old (Bob) and a sister, Adrienne, who is seven. Julie is asked who she likes to be with and is verbally given a list of ten or more possibilities including siblings, mother and father, grandparents and cousins. Without hesitation she calmly answers, "Lynette lives across the street. She's my friend" (May.84.CI.G).

Julie's mother states that before Julie started the Preschool program, she knew two boys who attended the same days she did. Julie plays with them at the Preschool; therefore, her activities are determined, in part, according to what the boys are doing. Patricia remarks that Julie rarely plays in the housekeeping area. She plays with blocks, trucks, trains, paints, puzzles, books and play dough. Mrs. Oliver relates, "Julie loves things that are messy. She's never happier than when she has paint to her elbows. [She enjoys] water, wet sand, baking, [and] play dough; . . . mucky things" (May.84.TI). She goes on to describe her as kind. "If someone was hurt they (Julie, Dianna, and Samuel) would very often be there being sympathetic and helpful before I had the opportunity" (May.84.TI).

Patricia and Dan Gordon

The Gordon's consider themselves to be strong community people. They live in an older area of the city in a home that was built shortly after World War II. Many of the people in that area no longer have school-aged children. The neighbourhood school building was built in the 1950's. The school population in the regular program is approximately 80. An alternate program also operates out of this building and has considerably more students. Upon completion of her year in Merryland Preschool Julie will join her two older siblings already in the "regular" progam at this neighbourhood school. The Gordon's prefer "orthodox" programs. Patricia's perspective is clear when she emphasizes that she is "not a person to introduce . . . things before their time."

> We still believe that the initial Reading, Writing and Arithmetic comes first and there will be a time for computers if you know your Math very well and you know the English language well and you can just be a logical and thoughtful person.
> I'm not a person to sit down and teach them before hand. Like, I like them to be introduced to each aspect of . . . each level of learning when they're ready for it. When it's being introduced at school. (May.84.PI.G)
>
> I'm not a person to sit down and teach my children to read before they've been introduced properly to the proper vowels and consonants in the right order. Because

> there is a right order that they're all introduced. I like the school to introduce it to them at the right time and then I will help after that. (May.84.PI.G)

The family has lived in their home for ten years. They moved in just after the birth of their first child. Renovations to the house have been made to accommodate growth in family size. Dan Gordon explains somewhat nostalgically, "Basically our house grew as our family grew." In the first year of the study, Dan's occupation requires that he live away from the family home for three months out of the year. That in itself likely affects the degree to which children can easily be involved in school programs that require them to be transported.

Dan Gordon expresses the feeling that ideas are derived from experience:

> [They are] just a part of your being . . . What you've learned and the things you do. As you grow up you get to figure out the things you don't like and the things you do like. The things you like are the things you want your children to be involved in . . . What you expect of them. (May.84.PI.G)

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Preschool Year

Family is the hub of the wheel. It is the center from which extensions are made to facilitate Julie's development. These include such things as activities, friends, trips to visit extended family. Her participation in activites, with groups or individuals, have strong links with home life. Most of her time in the Preschool year is spent at home. In activities away from home, at least one of her family is usually present. The spokes are well anchored. Parents provide the impetus to make the wheel roll smoothly. Their concern results from demonstrated "attachment" (Katz, 1986) and the presence of one or more family members. The mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is extensive.

Julie's parents consciously, but naturally, analyze and interpret Julie's behaviour as they observe her. Their actions and reactions to what they see indicate a sensitive awareness and attunement to her wants and needs. For example, her father describes her agenda for a week, including a music program one afternoon a week and Preschool program two mornings a week, and comments that "She has days where she's at home; free as a bird:" He also remarks that she can go into soccer if she has an interest there. He emphasizes that she is aware of what is involved in soccer because she watches it. However, Patricia remarks, "She's at the playground stage. She just wants to play at the playground." Dan uses this as a reference to support his contention that they don't push her. Reflecting upon Patricia's and his own actions, he feels they never push the children.

This year Julie "came of age", so her parents take her skiing. This might mean that having been involved as an observer she has a genuine interest in the sport such that she wants to participate actively and is now physically able to do so. Or, it might mean that she wants to please her parents (her mother comments that she likes to please). Julie unconsciously, or perhaps intuitively, knows that participation in this sport will do just that. They expect that Julie will follow a pattern of activities and day-to-day routine and go through progressive stages of development observed in her older brother and sister. Julie's father refers to this process by stating, "It's almost a stream. Her older brother and older sister set the pattern and she just falls in. . . .I can't help but stress that she just follows along with her older brother and older sister."

The home operates in a way that indicates a parental confidence in the children pursuing interesting activities. There are books, pencils, paper and electric typewriter easily accessible to the children. The Gordon's have what Dan describes as "a simplistic type of encyclopedia" easily accessible to the children. While Julie is not afforded undo attention, she is one of a group developing together.

The Gordons discuss situations that are possible only because Julie has other siblings and because she is not the eldest. For example, Dan remarks, "For a couple of years she went to the swimming pool and watched her older brother and sister participating and she sat there. And now this year she's in the program actively." It seems that the

Gordon's recognize that proximity of the school allows for a lot of mutual sibling support; sharing of ecological environments and experiences.

The family is established in the community and intends to remain so for a long time. "Patricia and I are active people in the community. That's why the teacher knows us and everybody knows us. Like in sports." The father's involvement with the children reflects his strong interests in sports and commitment to the value of sports participation. Program participation reflects their cultural values. Julie states emphatically, "I will go to Brownie Camp when I'm a Brownie." She participates in an early childhood music program and in skiing lessons. Dan comments that church is "not an 'active learning' program, but it's rather a 'do' program." The parents seems to understand "active learning" to mean a program that is teacher directed.

The Gordon's perception of parent involvement includes a faith in the system. "It may be a brave new world, but we're not that brave and we're happy with the regular program." Dan is referring to the program at the neighbourhood school in which the older children have been involved. The "regular program" begins in Kindergarten with a centers approach and tables and chairs. This is followed by Grade One where the parents understand that there will be desks in rows and standardized series for

Math and Reading. Another aspect of perspective is revealed when Dan states, "We automatically expect, without you even asking us, we basically expect our children to be completing university or its equivalent because we did; because we succeeded.

The Gordon family recognizes that Julie needs to play and Merryland Preschool provides that opportunity. Mrs. Oliver states as her first objective that she wants "to teach children how to get along with each other [and] to work together as a group having a feeling of responsibility for each other." Parents and teacher appear to differ in their ideas about how Julie's social development takes place. The Gordon's perception of the situation seems to be that children "grow out" of some anti-social behaviours or behaviours that are not acceptable in successive levels of orthodox education (what she will meet in the regular program). To the Gordon's it seems that socialization and "normalization" have more to do with biological maturation than with teaching as such.

> Sometimes in Merryland Preschool . . . Julie doesn't want to listen . . . We're aware of that and yet at the same time we've seen similar trends in her older brother and sister and they grew out of it and suddenly it was time to be a Kindergarten "type" person. (May.84.PI.G)

> Julie at one time really couldn't interact that well with her older sister but [within the last year or so] suddenly, wham! You know. Julie can put together intelligent thoughts and play along and she is

> interacting much more with her older sister. This will be role-playing . . . mostly. (May.84.PI.G)

Mrs. Oliver seems to believe socialization takes place through learning, with possible influence through the structuring of the environment.

Mrs. Gordon accepts and enjoys the position as parent helper in the classroom. This coincides with what Mrs. Oliver sees as necessary for a healthful Preschool program. Mr. Gordon describes Mrs. Gordon's level of commitment at the neighbourhood school through example: "Whenever they ask for volunteers, for example to tie up skates, you're looking at one official skate 'tier upper' right there." While thinking about her older girl who is now in Grade One, Patricia Gordon states that she misses the physical involvement.

> When they get into Grade One, it's almost like the doors are closed to parents. I mean they do have an Open House or something like that. But, you're not invited in the classroom anymore. (May.84.PI.G)

The Gordon's do not speak about developing parenting skills by being a "student" of the Preschool Cooperative. It appears that their membership in this Co-op is for the sole benefit of Julie. This is not what Mrs. Oliver would like them to think. Mrs. Oliver sees it as a mandate of her professional position to be a teacher of parents: "In the context of a Parent Co-op . . . I feel I am not only teaching children, but parents [too]."

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

In the Preschool year, parent involvement for the Gordon's means choosing a house which is close to the neighbourhood school and the university. Family involvement supplements parent involvement as the interactions of older and younger siblings facilitate the children's healthy development. Proximity of the school and inclusion of young siblings as spectators before they become participants in an activity, results in shared environments amongst family members. As responsible parents the Gordon's feel they must be aware and informed. They attend parent-teacher interviews and the Christmas concert; they have fun while taking part in a workshop and playing with materials used to teach Math. Parent involvement is acting from a firm philosophical base. They like "orthodox" programs. Parent involvement is having faith in the school system; supplementing what is offered at school; being a chauffeur; and filling in at school by working to help provide a better program for the children. Some organized time is planned but allowance is made for lots of free playtime for Julie. Parent involvement is applying knowledge from previous experiences with other siblings. It means preparing children for the future. It is taking advice from experts but not experimenting with a school program very different from the schooling the parents experienced as children. Dependable commitment as a community member is fundamental.

The Gordon Family - Kindergarten Year

This section begins by familiarizing the reader with Julie's learning environments. This is followed by a brief description of the teacher's perspective on both her teaching responsibility and parent involvement as it relates to the Kindergarten program. A description of Julie is given, formulated from information provided this year. The section concludes with parents' perceptions on parent involvement.

Entering Julie's Learning Environment

As facilitators of Julie's development, Julie's parents are involved in many ways. The following descriptions written by the parents illuminate aspects of the nature of environments made available by the parents for Julie's learning.

Father's Description

Scenario #1

> Julie and her sister Adrienne ski rountinely at Hare Mountain with me while their brother Bob practices with the Nancy Green racing group. It's important to me Julie and Adrienne learn to ski well. With that in mind, I arranged a private lesson for Julie and Adrienne. The girls were geared up and tickets were obtained as soon as we could after arrival at the hill on Thursday evening this February. The girls were then skied to the ski school area. Their instructor, Matt, arrived promptly. I was forgotten as Matt chatted to them and

> directed them off to the tow. I skied the same slope they were getting their lesson on so I saw them and they saw me. Each time they noticed me Julie and Adrienne called out in excited voices some piece of trivia. Most of the banter came when I was skiing and they were on the chair lift with Matt. (It was a triple chair so there was Adrienne on one side and Julie on the other.) The lesson finally ended and I skied down to join them. Julie and Adrienne were bubbling with excitement. Needless to say, their enthusiasm, and hopefully improvement in skiing, prompted me to arrange several more private lessons for them. (April.85.Q.G)

Scenario #2

> Julie in the past has accompanied me on bicycle excursions. But, up until Monday (four days ago) she had done this on the extra seat I have on my bicycle. Monday, Julie was allowed to accompany me, her brother Bob and sister Adrienne and three other neighbourhood kids on an after supper expedition on bicycles. . . .Julie was very happy to be part of the crowd and peddles as quickly as anyone. Joy turned to temporary sadness as the tour ended when Julie "wiped out." It's the second time today that happened. Julie cried as though it were the bicycle's fault. Julie recovered quickly and we were soon home. (April.85.Q.G)

In his parenting role in the Kindergarten year, Dan Gordon predetermines some of the things that are "important" for the children. He claims, "It's important to me, Julie and Adrienne (sister) learn to ski well. With that in mind, I arrange a private lesson." After the lesson ends he remarks, "Julie and Adrienne were bubbling with excitement. Needless to say, their enthusiasm and, hopefully, improvement in skiing prompted me to arrange several more private lessons for them." In another scenario, father allows Julie to be part of the crowd consisting of brother, sister, father and three neighbourhood kids, on a bike excursion. This appears to be another "coming of age" and the father feels proud. In general, he includes her in activities where the difficulty level for Julie is still very high--beyond a comfort level. When the expressed desire on Julie's part is high, her inclusion results in considerable growth and development in a short period of time--the duration of the excursion in this case. Is this encouragement? Inclusion? Pushing?

Mother's Description

Scenario #1

> I had been trying to teach Julie how to tie. After a few unsuccessful attempts, she generally ended up being frustrated. Nevertheless, we persisted and several times she almost succeeded. Then one day, with no help from me, she said, "I did it!" We were both pleased and now she even volunteers to tie for her little brother. (April.85.Q.G)

Scenario #2

> This week I had the opportunity of being on Julie's field trip to the Albert Cowan House. There the children were introduced to how some things were done a hundred years ago. I observed Julie as she moved from one activity to another. She seemed quite enthusiastic. A pleasant moment came when I heard her say, "Mmmmmmm. . . ." as she tasted the scones and butter and ice cream that she'd helped make. (April.85.Q.G)

Oakland School Kindergarten Program

The following is the researcher's account of a morning shared with the Kindergarten children.

As I sit at the long table a dinosaur stares at me with browny green eyes and bright Styrofoam teeth. It is made of paper mache and stands in the centre of the classroom. The room is very bright with many windows along one long side of the room. The sun feels warm on my back. There is an open arrangement of tables and chairs. Materials are readily available to the children.

A little girl comes in humming a tune as the bell sounds. Five more children come in, put their things away and quietly talk amongst themselves.

"As soon as you have . . . ", the teacher begins.

A child speaks out: "I can't find my library book."

Mrs. Leighton, the teacher, replies, "Bring it tomorrow."

There are now seven children. At 9:03 there is a knock at the door and two more children come in. The teacher greets them with, "Hello, hello." She proceeds with collecting library books.

Julie speaks with another girl. "My mom's going to help driving and I love swimming."

Mrs. Leighton reminds people that the "helping hand" today is Lynette. They sing together a "Good Morning" song. "Good morning to you . . . This is the way to start a new day." The teacher asks questions having to do with the calendar and the weather. The day is the 18th. The teacher asks, "What do all the teens start with?" This class with only nine students does have a particular feel about it, perhaps because everyone is very familiar with one another.

The morning's activities include a trip to the school library where the librarian shares books of rhymes with the children who seem to enjoy visualizing pictures evoked by the words of the poems. Back in the classroom two children know that it is their turn for "Show and Tell" and are ready to talk to the class about something brought from home. The teacher encourages questionning. This precedes "Playtime" when children move to different centres for small group or individual activities. There is a sand box, an easel with paints, a book corner, a listening centre with taped stories and books so the children can follow along. There is a housekeeping area and a pieces of paper on a table with an activity for the children to do that involves tracing and circling. This is intended to reinforce children's understandings of different shapes. Some children feed and study the gerbil.

After recess the children sit around one long table for snack. When they finish they meet together on the rug and talk about the trip to the dentist's office the previous day. The teacher holds up a small hard nugget and then passes it around. The dentist had apparently shown them a liquid and explained that it would get very hard. The teacher explains the meaning of "cavity" and the need for getting out germs before the dentist uses the filling material.

"Think about things you saw at the dentist's office," she comments. She reviews with the children the different rooms they entered and their names. Referring to the x-ray machine she states, "The big camera didn't really look like a camera."

Fred and Julie mention the toys and books and things. The teacher remarks that this was a special kind of dentist who has only children come to see him.

A child asks, "Are we going to work on our Dinosaur book today?" The teacher replies that they are going to make a book for the dentist to say "Thank you." She urges, "Make it interesting. Use lots of colors and the whole page." Each child is to draw about what he or she remembers seeing at the dentist's office. One child is drawing the chair that goes up and down. Karl seems uninterested in doing this and draws a "Pac Man." The teacher comments, "I like the way Adam and Sarah and Emily are working so hard on their pictures."

After class outside the school, I see Julie and Lynette go across the street together on their way home.

Teacher's Perspective

Mrs. Leighton, the Kindergarten teacher at Oakland School, has her room set up in centres. She explains:

> The children move from centre to centre and work. The children choose their activities. A lot of the activities the children do, involve play. All of these play activities have educational objectives. (April.85.TI.G)

She understands that children at this age learn by listening, observing and experimenting. She sees the following as her main goals:

> To help the children make the transition from home to school and to provide opportunities for the child to develop socially, physically, intellectually, creatively and emotionally. (April.85.TI.G)

Mrs. Leighton seems to feel that parent involvement means communicating with the parents and having them assist in the program so that they have a better idea of what is happening with their child at school. The teacher feels that the nature of the program, with a centres approach and concrete experiences, dictates that extra hands are needed. Helpers in the classroom are generally welcome. However, the enrollment is small this year and parent helpers are not necessary. She feels that providing for parent participation in the program is desirable at this level because it is the child's first school experience. There is a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) that makes decisions about how funds collected will be spent. It discusses special activities and makes suggestions about what members feel should be included in the program.

Julie

Julie's mother feels she is getting out and doing things on her own more. Patricia believes that in the Kindergarten program Julie feels she has learned a lot. She thinks that Julie has experienced self-fulfillment because she has progressed.

Julie's Kindergarten teacher describes her as "a very strong-minded child who comes up with some very creative ideas." Patricia states that sometimes Julie likes to spend time in the kitchen with her: setting the table, drying dishes, helping with baking. Patricia understands these as special moments for both of them because they have a chance to share things together. During the last year Julie has been involved in the following programs: swimming, children's movement, Early Childhood Music, and skiing. Julie camped with her family for ten days during two different trips. The family went on a ski trip. She continues to play a lot with her best friend, Lynette.

Julie adjusts her behaviour in accordance with the person with whom she is playing. For example, when playing with the very quiet girl who lives next door, she is very gentle.

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Kindergarten Year

Now that she is, as her mother describes, a "Kindergarten[er]" she is physically stronger and more coordinated than she was a year earlier. She is involved in more daring adventures. On a bike excursion with father, brother, sister and three neighbourhood kids, Julie "wiped out." She "cried as though it were the bicycle's fault." With her being the youngest in "the crowd", and this being the first time she is included ("coming of age"), she does not want the crying to be seen as a weakness. She appears to be protecting her self-esteem. Comparing Julie's capabilities with what she did a year ago, Julie's mother feels that, in all things, she is "more independent . . . managing what she's doing, . . . in charge, . . . [and] more in control of everything." Julie is encouraged to be this way. These actions reflect aspects of parenting she experiences. It appears that she is encouraged to participate at a level of difficulty (skiing and cycling) rather that at a comfort level.

Julie's parents describe her as "bossy." This appears to be synonymous with what they perceive to be her "good leadership qualities." Their parenting approach takes the form of "inaction" in circumstances where she appears "bossy." The encounters, themselves, determine how Julie will respond to conflict situations. She works out her own differences independently:

> When she plays with this friend across the street they both want to be leaders. After awhile one goes home because they can't agree ["cooperate" (Piaget, 1965)] any longer. . . . Other times they'll get along for a long time. It depends [upon] whether

> something comes up that each one wants to control . . . to be leader. (April.85.PI.G)

Patricia believes that in some cases Julie feels it is "an invasion for mom to come along" (April.85.PI.G). Her mother's involvement may be inappropriate from Julie's perspective. Julie seems to be acting according to unwritten rules in the child culture. There are certain expectations of parental behaviour and accompanying embarrassment for Julie if the rules are not followed. Mother should not be going along to the birthday party of Julie's friend. The child seems to treasure the opportunity to be in control of some piece of her life. These are experiences away from parents' eyes and need only be shared if the child so wishes.

Patricia feels "learning is best when you have a structured situation." She feels that Julie, like other children her age, will find something for herself to do for a brief period of time, but will learn more if she is told what to do. About schooling specifically, Patricia's comments infer an attitude that the child should be expected to fit into the learning environment, rather than the teaching methods be responsive to the expressed interests and needs of the child. She explains:

> In Grade One you have to sit at a desk. They're a year older and they can handle the transition. It's a long time for a Grade One [student] to sit through a whole day of structured classes. But I'm sure Julie can

> fit into that, especially when she's, like I say, a year older. (April.85.PI.G)

The Kindergarten teacher permits Julie to use her "leadership qualities." She describes an episode in the library early in the year:

> Julie took a book out and sat down on the floor with the children gathered around her. She told them that she was going to read them a story. She went through the book, page by page giving a perfectly logical story to accompany the pictures. The children were absolutely captivated by the story. . . .When she was through "reading" they all clapped. This was very early in the year. She already had a lot of confidence. I think she felt very good about the experience. She was very pleased that the children responded the way they did, although she didn't seem surprised. She seemed used to having an audience. (April.85.TI.G)

This description is consistent with what the mother relates. "For the most part, Julie's in charge when she's with other children."

The teacher expresses the feeling that parent helpers are appropriate because of the nature of the program: many field trips and helping hands. There is no indication that she views parents as students of parenting. Julie's mother does not likely see herself as a student in this situation either. Although Patricia has indicated that she finds it helpful to be able to observe her children when they are involved in a program she states that it is a small class, so there is no need to go in. The teacher does not want parents doing things that are in conflict with her philosophy. She does not want them coming simply to observe her or their child.

> I don't feel that's the part the parents should be playing in the Kindergarten room. They should be there to assist with the program and to assist the children but not just be an observer. (April.85.TI.G)

However, when Julie's mother does help she likes "to observe from my own point of view."

The teacher knows that her traditional methods are acceptable to Patricia. Their perspectives on "schooling" are similar and they are well known to each another. There is no threat. In reference to the music program, Patricia comments, "I really like [demonstrations at regular intervals] because I can see what Julie's doing." She suggests that parent involvement "is being with your child or doing actvities with your child whenever you can." Patricia comments further:

> I don't go running to the teacher every once in awhile to find out how my child is doing. I like to wait to a report card. (April.85.PI.G)

The teacher states that the play activites in the Kindergarten setting have educational objectives. She feels she provides a variety of activities at Kindergarten that accommodate individual differences: they learn by experimenting, listening and observing. The teacher speaks of children excited about the change to Grade One. She says they will remember Kindergarten activities and reminisce that something in particular was fun, but will be quite happy maturing and adjusting to the new Grade One program.

This perspective fits with the Gordon's depiction of a time for everything and nothing before its time. Parent and teacher philosophies seem to be congruent. "Tensions" are positive between teacher and parent because perspectives are similar and easily understood. They have been shared over time as three of the Gordon children have had this teacher.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

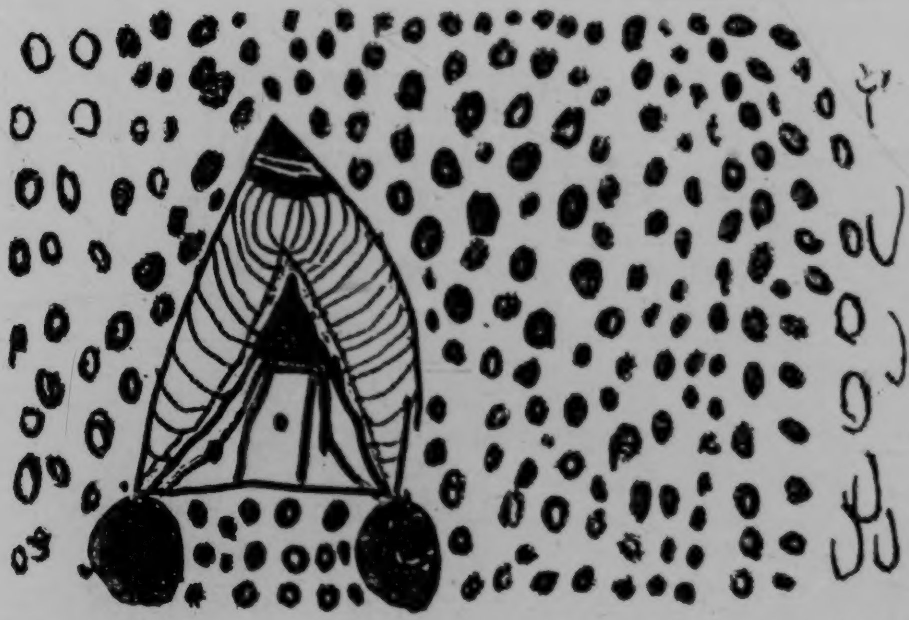
In the Kindergarten year skiing is added to the extra-curricular activities in which Julie participates. These activities are part of what the parents provide to complement what is provided by the school program. This year in Kindergarten, parent helpers are not needed because there is a small enrollment. Parents take turns helping with kindercooking. Julie's mother is happy to do this because it helps her know what Julie experiences at school. These parents still feel that, ideally, parent involvement is being well informed. It is participating with your child--being there.

The Gordon Family - Grade One Year

This section begins with Julie's brief description of activities she can remember having done and that her mother or father had something to do with.

Julie's Book

I'm going on a trip with my mom and dad, my sister and Jordan and Bob. I'm going to Jasper. It's fun there. The beds are even fun. (Note illustration below.)



Last time we played school with our sisters in my shed, Lynette and me always walk away. We don't like playing it. It's really boring. Sometimes they don't even pay attention to us. They just work in their own desks and don't even give us work.

All moms and dads came to the Pancake Breakfast.

Last night I went shopping with my dad.

We're going somewhere to swim. It was at somebody's house. They had a swimming pool. Dad, mom, me and Jordan were going but Bob and Adrienne didn't 'wanna' come. But they were going to come later. (March.86)

Oakland School Grade One Program

Late in the Kindergarten year there is a concern about losing Mrs. Leighton and having a class that would be a "three-way split" (K/One/Two). Mrs. Gordon talks about what actually happened in September.

> When they started, Kindergarten was in a three-way split which went on for a month. It just wasn't working out. Julie was with the Grade Two's in the morning and in the afternoon she went to another classroom where she was with Kindergarten[er]s which she thought was degrading. To her it was, "Do we have to go back with the Kindergarten[er]s again?" Suddenly she's this grown up little girl who didn't want to be part of the Kindergarten class. She wasn't happy. The children weren't happy. Not that they didn't like the teacher. They still had Mrs. Leighton and she's wonderful. But just the idea of having to go back with the Kindergarten[er]s was not something which they appreciated. The principal changed it all around so that they had Mrs. Leighton in the morning for academic and another teacher in the afternoon for non-academic. (March.86.PI.G)

In the class there are twelve Grade One students and five Grade Two students. The children work from a standardized Reading program and Math workbooks. The room is arranged with four rows of desks. The Grade One's sit in the first three rows closest to the door and the Grade Two's, except for one student, are in one row. There is a long table at the back of the room. During the observation period, the teacher used the table to work with each grade in Reading.

Today there is a substitute teacher who is not aware of my prearranged visit. The children are very interested in the bunny the substitute teacher has brought. In the coat area Julie is getting ready for class. She has a bad cough.

At 9:00 the substitute teacher shares the bunny with the class. Many children are asking to hold him. Julie is now getting to her desk. She is obviously not feeling well. She sits on her feet on her desk seat. The teacher checks the attendance.

The principal speaks over the intercom to wish students a "Good morning" and to introduce the substitute teachers in the building this morning.

The teacher begins, "Good morning boys and girls." She tells the children that the bunny belongs to her daughter. It was bought in a pet shop for $20. She hands him to a boy to hold and pass on when finished. The teacher directs the children's attention to the clock and tells them that they can all have a turn to hold the bunny for one minute. "When the long red hand is back at the '6' pass it on."

Julie comments, "He's cute." She is very interested.

There are sentences printed on the blackboard. They are from a story the Grade One's read yesterday. For example, "The animals want__ to change." A student is asked to add the missing letters. After the blanks have been filled in, the children, as a group, read the sentences.

The children manage the sharing of the bunny quite well. Julie has her feet between the bars at the back of her desk seat. Her feet are touching the floor and her body is straight.

At 9:15 the substitute teacher starts the Grade One children on printing. Today they are doing "do" and "dr." She has children suggest words containing these combinations. Dry, drip, and drive are some of the suggestions. The Grade One's take out printing books from their desks.

Later, the Grade Two children gather at the back of the room. One boy reads aloud while others listen. The Grade One's have a workbook activity.

Julie is near the front of the room holding a felt marker. She is interested in petting the bunny. Oliver has the bunny and passes it on. He remarks, "I kiss him" which he does before he gives it up. Julie watches over his shoulder.

The Aid asks Julie if she has done a particular workbook page. Julie answers, "No." The Aid explains to the Grade One's the workbook exercise they are to be doing.

Julie has the bunny crawling over her workbook. Julie goes to her coat pocket and gets a pencil. She continues to have the rabbit on her desk. Julie, with "encouragement" from Lynette, passes the rabbit on.

Julie is standing sideways at her desk sharpening a new pencil with her own sharpener. The Aid is moving amongst the Grade One's keeping them on task. Originally the Aid was brought in because of two students who could not speak English. One student speaks English quite well now. Today the Aid is helping generally with all of the students.

The substitute teacher is with the Grade Two's. One boy is sent out of the room by the teacher for "causing trouble." Julie is working in her workbook. She is attending well to this task. The Aid is helping Lynette.

Julie is now looking at the bunny again. The Aid puts the bunny away. Julie goes back to her workbook. A boy speaks to her. He seems to be trying to understand his workbook work by looking at hers.

At 10:05 the teacher gives the Grade Two's a workbook assignment. The Grade One's are to get their Readers and meet at the back. Julie looks at the bunny on her way to the long table. She stands behind a chair at the end of the table. A student tells her that that one is for the teacher. I think Julie was aware of that and wanted to exercise a little bit of control by standing there for the time being to pretend that she might sit there and have the "teacher" chair. Julie tends to want to have control. If she is not able to do something, then someone else should not be able to. All the other children are sitting down. Julie goes to get another chair and finds a place for herself.

The children read through a story from the reader, taking turns reading aloud. Julie reads through at her own pace and flips back to where the class is following along while one student reads. Julie yawns. She is really stuffed up. She is now following the reading. When called upon she reads three sentences. Her reading is word by word.

The teacher reviews what should have been completed in the workbook and shows the children the new work to be done.

At 10:30 the recess bell rings. Julie goes over to touch the bunny again through the cage. She takes her reader back. She sorts ~~some~~ readers into a pile. The teacher quickens Julie. "Recess will be over soon." Julie is slowly taking her shoes off but is not in a hurry to leave. The teacher speaks to two other children: "You have to get ready."

A girl is feeding the rabbit some lettuce and Julie acts almost offended. She remarks, "Where did you get that?" She appears to want to have the "greatest" privileges.

Julie comments again, "Cute bunny." A boy is in charge of feeding the hamster. Julie is one of the last out for recess.

After recess Julie takes off her snow clothes. She puts her head down on her coat as if she would like to leave it there. Julie is the last one to have her things put away. She gets a drink at the back of the room and moves to sit on her knees on her desk seat. Slowly she gets to work.

The substitute teacher instructs the Grade One's: "When you get your reading workbook pages done, get your Math workbook and complete the pages in there." Julie is on her feet. She taps her pencil on her book. She complains to the teacher: "I don't know what to do here." Julie turns around and watches the girl behind her complete some work. She seems to be asking for help. She is doing her work. Julie coughs deeply. She checks behind again to see how that girl has done the next page. The Aid moves to help her. Julie does not seem to easily understand what is required but she is not bothered by this.

It is 11:00 and the teacher is working with the Grade Two's on measurement. The Aid is helping Julie again. Julie looks behind her. She is sitting on her knees. Julie goes to a cubbie and sorts through Math workbooks. She takes a lot of time getting hers. With this cold it seems to be a day "to just get through."

The Aid checks the girl's work behind Julie and helps her. The teacher scolds one of the First Grade students. "You get busy and stop fooling around."

Julie stands up in her desk pushing her pencil high into the air making it move with her hand as if ~~it~~ is a plane or a spaceship. She turns to the girl behind and taps her eraser on the girl's book. She talks quietly with expression about something that seems of interest to her. The Aid comes to check on her work. Julie wanders to the front of the room and back. She hits her pencil on her thumb while interacting with the girl who sits behind her. The Aid looks at her workbook again. She sends Julie to sharpen her pencil. She does so and pauses to observe the rabbit on the way back. The Aid has more instruction for Julie. Julie erases and writes in her workbook.

The Grade Two's are doing problems on the chalkboard. The teacher asks if there is a Grade One child who has the work all done. Julie looks over the shoulder of the person in front of her. When Grade One's complete their work and have it corrected by the Aid, they are to bring it to the teacher.

Julie has her hand up. She watches the Aid working with the boy in front of her. Concentration in the room seems difficult. The teacher is often speaking to different children and calling out and asking someone to sit down.

Julie's Math workbook page is mostly completed. She plays with a plastic egg that is stuffed with a little chick. She turns around to speak with the girl behind her. "I don't know what to do."

The teacher turns on the computer at the back of the classroom.

Julie is on her feet in a crouched position on her desk seat. She is dropping the eraser end of the pencil on her workbook. She talks with the girl across the aisle. The Aid helps Julie again.

A girl in Grade Two is working at the computer. The girl's program will not come up and the teacher gets another teacher to come in. The girl is not spelling her name the way she first entered it.

Two older students enter with another teacher who has been summoned to help. A student asks him, "Why do your students follow you?" The teacher replies, "Because they are curious." This teacher may be from the alternative program that operates out of this school.

At 11:45 the buzzer sounds. Julie walks with her workbook on her head to put it away. She straightens workbooks. She collects a couple of other books and puts them away.

Three mothers are at the door and come in. One mother notices the rabbit and comes to see it (March.86.PO.G).

Teacher's Perspective

Mrs. Leighton plans with an awareness of a need "at this level . . . to deal with the whole child. . . . Part of your role is to be understanding . . . like a mother; caring and supportive" (March.86.TI.G). She aims to give the children "a firm foundation in the academics." In Language Arts she explains that this means basic phonics, comprehension skills, "competence in reading and making educated guesses as to what the words or the vocabulary meanings might be." In Arithmetic she feels she is developing "just the basics so they have something to build on in the upcoming years." Listening habits are a focus of teaching as is the continuing development of social skills.

Mrs. Leighton states that communication is important as is the need for her to have an understanding of the home environment. "I have been to several of their homes and have a good relationship with them (mothers)." There are no parent helpers in the classroom this year. Help with the leisure reading program at home is solicited from parents. Mrs. Leighton feels that parent involvement means that the parent should be knowledgeable about what the child is doing at school and take part in the education of their child both at home and at school wherever applicable and possible.

Julie

Some things "never change." Julie's close friendship with Lynette is one of those things. Sitting in the Grade One classroom, I look up at heart-shaped pieces of construction paper that are hanging from wires strung between the corners of the room. The one that is of interest to me has been started by the teacher and completed by a child. It reads: "A friend is a nice person. My best friend is Julie" (March.86.PO.G). Lynette is described by Julie's father as her "partner in crime in 'evaporating'" when Julie and she are playing "school" with the older sisters. Julie feels the play is not as she would like it to be. This seems to mean the times when Julie perceives that the older girls are dominating the making of the rules in the "game".

About Julie's relationship with her older brother, Patricia says, "Julie thinks Bob is fun to play with but she refuses to be bossed around by him." Patricia feels Julie and her sister have "similar interests, similar toys and they play a great deal together." Julie attends Brownies now and enjoys working on and earning badges. Her mother feels she is proud about getting some of the same badges as her sister even though her sister is in her third year at Brownies.

Patricia believes Julie's play with her young brother is enjoyable for Julie because she thinks he is lots of fun. "There are many times when she is mean to him and shuts him out of her activities. She often "uses" him for her own gains" (March.86.Q.G).

Julie's mother states that Julie especially enjoyed the following activities while on vacation with the family: swimming, boating, hiking, fishing, cookouts, berry picking, walks to the store with her 18 year old cousin, and sleeping with her 16 year old cousin. Patricia says Julie is a "huggable" child who is always there when mother's lap is available.

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Grade One Year

Julie seems strongly influenced in her decisions and her actions by the emotion elicited in a given situation. Dan states:

> Under pressure you've lost Julie. If you're trying to force her, she's gone. If you order her to do something, you're in trouble. (March.86.PI.G)
>
> If she's playing by herself . . . great. But when her sister suddenly starts ordering her to do whatever it is. No, thank you. Goodbye. . . .[Amy] is very quiet, so Julie will behave the same way. (March.86.PI.G)

There is respect for this facet of Julie's personality. This affects their parenting techniques. Dan Gordon remarks:

> If I say, "Julie, you're going skiing tonight." Then she won't go with me. If I say, "Julie, would you like to go skiing with me tonight?", her face lights up and, of course, she'd like to go. (March.86.PI.G)

Psychology is an intuitive dimension of their parenting perspective. Their observations help them as facilitators of Julie's development:

> We became bystanders, sort of watching Julie in a "school" outside of school being taught to do this, that and the next thing. She and her friend both rebelling every once and awhile. Deciding they don't want to play "school" any more. They have enough of that during the day. And will these bossy older sisters please go collectively away! (March.86.PI.G)

Julie likes play that is self-determined and under her control. This does not seem to be the way it is in a soccer game:

> Julie wanted into [soccer], but then didn't really enjoy it. Instead of participating in the play, she often picked dandelions or lay on the grass. (March.86.Q.G)

There is a strong element of "family involvement" in the Gordons activities. Patricia Gordon relates:

> Julie ski raced at Jasper. Her brother and sister raced also while daddy worked as an official. She enjoyed her races and especially liked the evening swim at the hotel pool. (March.86.Q.G)

At times Dan demonstrates careful attunement to reactions of this young child.

> Julie enjoys her dad very much. She especially likes to play tricks on him and she enjoys his teasing . . . She quite likes it when he takes "just her" to . . . do . . . errands. She thinks it's fun when he reads to her because he "creates" words which aren't even in the story." (March.86.Q.G)

Julie's mother explains that part of parent involvement is feeling what your child feels. This perception is revealed in Patricia's description of Julie's interactions with her grandparents.

> Julie hasn't seen her grandfather very often but she thinks he's a fun person because he sings silly songs and does little dances [and] . . . because he always had treats to give her." (March.86.Q.G)
>
> Julie was quite proud to be one of the many guests at her grandmother's 70th birthday party. Her grandmother was very happy to have her there too, especially since Julie's own birthday is only two days later. (March.86.Q.G)

Julie participates in several community-related activities such as an early childhood movement program. Her mother remarks:

> There are two young instructors who are very kind to them (Julie and her sister). Julie really enjoys all the equipment. She has lots of fun. (March.86.Q.G)

Julie enjoys the activities at Brownies and thinks that being one "is very special." She takes skiing, swimming and music lessons. She gets along with her skiing instructor and does well. While she often complains about her swimming instructor "making her do difficult things" she seems happy while in the water. In regard to music lessons Patricia Gordon seems very pleased by Julie's performance. "Julie has a wonderful music teacher whom she really likes. . . .Julie enjoys this program which is mostly musical theory."

Julie's experiences are diverse. For example, last summer, "Julie was pleased to be among the children whom her uncle took on a mini boat trip to get a close-up view of an iceberg. Just one other little thrilling adventure for her!"

There is very little planning on her part. Parents, siblings and peers determine the choice of activity and influence the nature of her experience. Katz (1986) contends that we are teaching children to get satisfaction from approval, and diminishing the love of learning for itself. What is the meaning for Julie of this activity called "skiing?" Her parents remark:

> We make sure our kids go skiing often enough so they can become good little racers. We make sure that they're good little readers and [mathematicians]. (March.86.PI.G)

Dan's remarks reflect the underlying assumption he verbalized at another time that "every child needs one-upmanship." He sees the world as competitive. The children's ability to ski well gives them an advantage.

In this year, Mrs. Gordon joins with other parents in meeting the superintendent to have Julie's teacher kept on staff. The teacher and her methods are a "known quantity." The employment of an unknown as a replacement invites risk. Taking a chance deviates from Gordon's faith in "orthodox" ways. Mrs. Leighton is the "ideal" person because she has been there a long time and is willing to take "this less than desirable" situation of a "split" class. The teacher's and the parents' perspectives seem to be well understood by one another and are similar. Would the parents have learned different means for facilitating healthy development of children if, as clients, they had experienced a teacher using a more child-centred approach to teaching? Is the teacher (as a teacher of Parents) a substantial force in terms of child development and learning?

The teacher perceives of her class (One/Two; she also teaches a Kindergarten class in the afternoon) as a "split" class requiring that she deal with each group separately. Each level receives instruction in turn. This is evident in the teacher's reflections on the topic of parent participation in the program:

> This year the parents are not as involved and maybe not as involved as they would like to be. But I've found planning for three grades was enough for me to do. I planned what the children had to do, what I had to do, and my Aid had to do and I just couldn't find a sensible way to include parents in the program. It's not that I didn't want them, but I really did not find it necessary for them to be in the classroom. (March.86.TI.G)

The Gordon's perspective gives a particular meaning to authority, roles, and "right ways" of doing things. When speaking about a possible "three-way split," (Kindergarten, Grade One and Grade Two teaching assignment) the mother states, "The principal changed it all around." Patricia believes that the changes were made because of the children's actions and reactions. It may be that the parents want the present teacher and her approach because their action knowledge (Barnes, 1975) does not include enough information about other possible approaches to multi-age arrangements. The Gordon's are not interested in new arrangements. It seems they are comfortable with traditional methods partly because that is the way they learned.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

In the Grade One year parent involvement for the Gordon's is finding programs. It is asking children about what they do when they are away from home. It involves watching a child's interaction with siblings and friends. It is support for what is being developed at school. Family involvement continues to be encouraged and developed. Parent involvement is orchestrating healthy emotional development. It is being responsible for making learning materials readily available to the children, planning travel experiences, and introducing lifeskills such as understanding basic economics. Being knowledgeable is necessary. They feel it is important to realize that it is sometimes better for the children to be with another teacher rather than with parents. Parent involvement is debating whether to move from the district because all the children are in "split" classes: it is doing a "simplistic investigation to satisfy themselves that this situation is not detrimental to the children's education; and it is deciding it is best to stay in this community. This year it means not being in the classroom; not seeing interpersonal relationships and not seeing for yourself if she's really learning. The Gordon's believe that communication with the teacher is important. Participation in school evening activities and being part of a group of parents are both part of being involved. Parent involvement is accepting a "natural evolution in the education period" where the parent is not there with the child as much. It involves having trust in the system. They are responsible for instilling attitudes. They are adding new adventures and helping the children develop life skills.

The Blaine Family - Preschool Year

Andrew

Andrew is three years older than his brother, Ivan. His mother feels that only recently has Andrew begun to include Ivan in his play. He occasionally enjoys his company but often is neutral towards him. She feels Andrew resents Ivan messing up his things and sometimes "baits" Ivan into bad behaviour. Andrew's parents relate that Andrew acts up when he feels he is not getting enough attention or when his parents attend to Ivan. Andrew keeps a watchful eye on Ivan and lets his mother know if he is in danger.

Andrew comments, "I like being with everyone. Everyone is my friend. I like being with all my friends and stuff the best" (May.84.CI.B).

His Preschool teacher claims he is perhaps the most social of the boys in the study:

> He's very sensitive to other people's feelings. He's a very bright little boy and is much more aware of not only other children's feelings within the classroom but, adults also.
>
> I can think of situations where he would put an arm around someone. "You didn't do that quite right but, if you try again it will be all right." He would almost take a parental role or a teacher's role to encourage others. (May.84.TI)

His intellectual maturity is apparent not only in his affective development but also in cognitive abilities:

> Andrew, I think is above average in maturity and he's certainly above average in intelligence; in his accomplishments for his age. Very often he talked almost like an adult within a situation of Show and Tell. The children would be a bit puzzled or not quite understand. He would play word games and they would miss it. And then he'd turn to one of, either the [college] student or myself and say "Well you got the joke, didn't you?" He quickly understood that the children didn't understand. (May.84.TI)

Andrew's father states that Andrew is not the right kind of kid to fit into a rigid program. He claims that they take an "environmental approach" to teaching at home. "Things are going on and he just absorbs the experience."

The inference seems to be that this is not the way it will be at school and, therefore, school will not provide the optimal environment for Andrew's style of learning.

His mother believes that what he likes to do most is talk. He likes to converse and exchange ideas. He watches certain programs on TV--ones that are not easy to listen to or that provide information for him. He enjoys playing with Space Lego. He rides his bicycle outside and plays in the sandbox. She states that he certainly enjoys playing with other friends but adds that he does not need that everyday to keep him happy. At Merryland Preschool he likes to play in the area with the train, cars, trucks and "bricks." He usually enjoys the craft. He enjoys eating snack and "Show and Tell." His mother feels the latter is probably his favourite activity or is most important to him because it gives him a chance to talk to a group of people. It also makes him the centre of attention. His mother believes that he enjoys talking and explaining things.

She remarks, "I don't know why he enjoys Billy's company as much as he does. He's an amiable-type guy. He can be led into all kinds of imaginative things." Andrew's mother remarks about his relationship with his father:

> Andrew sees his father, Carl, in the mornings and after about 5:30 p.m. during the week and all day on Saturday and Sunday. Carl looks after the kids a lot during these times. Andrew and Carl enjoy many activities together: playing with toys (Carl especially likes Space Lego!), working

> in the workshop, and outside in the yard. They occasionally go to the office to play with the computer and other office equipment. Carl roughhouses with the boys. They all enjoy that. Carl reads on alternate nights to Andrew at bedtime. Carl isn't a "distant" father. He is involved and I think, enjoys it. (May.84.Q.B)

On a family summer vacation Andrew was involved with his father fishing, on the water slide, and playing video games.

Andrew's mother speaks of her relationship with Andrew:

> I view my responsiblities as providing a caring environment for the kids and ensuring their health and safety. I try to provide Andrew with enough activity to keep him mentally and physically active. We are not "playmates." I'll help him with projects he wants to do or arrange for friends to come over, but rarely do I sit down and play with his toys or try to be a formal teacher for him. He frequently wants to help with what I'm doing around the house which I try to accommodate as much as possible. We enjoy it. (May.84.Q.B)

Andrew has no cousins. He saw his maternal grandparents 27 days in the past year. They live 3000 miles away. He saw his paternal grandparents 14 days in the past year. They live 2500 miles away. Andrew's mother describes Andrew's relationship with his maternal grandfather as very close. She thinks her father is enjoying a "second childhood" when Andrew is around.

Lois and Carl Blaine

The Blaines are "students of parenting." Lois reads literature on child development and shares the learning with Carl. They apply suggestions from the most recent literature on child growth and development. A trust in, and adherence to what the research advocates seem to have a greater impact on their actions than does intuition. Childhood experiences are rarely mentioned.

Their lives appear to be well planned including when to have children. It is like a block of time has been allotted to the present episode of their lives--as one would when deciding to take an apprenticeship program. The Blaine's moved to this newer neighbourhood for the children's benefit. They chose the school with Andrew's personality in mind.

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Preschool Year

Lois Blaine believes that what Andrew likes to do most is talk. The researcher oberves that Andrew does indeed have a "tell" at "Show and Tell Time." His interaction with Mrs. Oliver illuminates an aspect of his developing perspective because of parent involvement activities. He talks about his birthday cake. Mrs. Oliver appears to assume that his mother makes the cake when she remarks, "You have a special mom to remember on Mother's Day." Andrew's actions leave the researcher with the feeling that he has a need for the truth to be known and that he must be verbal. He immediately interjects, "Dad and mom made it." He wants to share all that he knows. The "truth" that he gives concerning parent involvement indicates that perhaps father is directly involved in many aspects of his daily life including one in which Mrs. Oliver does not expect him to have a part. Andrew's mother admits that how she reacts to his need to talk in different ways at different times, depends upon her own psychological strength. She is aware of the importance of nurturing rather than attempting to stifle or eliminate Andrew's need. She describes Andrew's relationship with his maternal grandfather as intense because "Grandpa listens to Andrew with more patience than anyone which makes Andrew happy and content." Other parental actions permit healthy development of Andrew's "urge" to speak. They feel that one on one time is important and facilitate it regularly.

When asked about something he does with his father, Andrew speaks in an excited voice that seems to communicate, "Now I have really got something to say." It seems to immediately elicit a strong and good feeling. He exclaims, "There's too many things!" He speaks about a swing set and fort he and his father are going to get, together. Andrew's reactions seem to validate two of Carl Blaine's stated intentions concerning parent involvement. First, "Our orientation is very, very strongly child oriented at this stage." Second, he is very adamant about planning so that one on one time with Andrew happens. Lois and Carl switch kids each night for bedtime stories and

Carl bathes the boys for the expressed purpose of ensuring his time is shared with each child.

The parents state strongly that Andrew is considered unique and that determination of his life's activities should be made when his personal wishes are known. They do not consider him as an extension of themselves. "Children are as equal as anyone else--as any adult on a very fundamental level."

When asked what it is like when he plays with his younger brother, Andrew explains, "Well, it's like a ton of bricks just falling on me." Both mother's and father's perception of parent involvement is clearly affected because Andrew has a younger brother. Descriptions that continuously support the uniqueness of each child are part of that perception. "I don't think I would always be looking for the same thing [in a school program] for each child." Carl Blaine feels that formal teaching (schooling) will be introduced slowly and that the kids will gradually "phase" into it. He expects teaching in Grade One to be not much different from teaching in Kindergarten.

The Blaine's chose their neighbourhood because they felt the neighbours reflect their values. Their parental involvement perspective includes a belief in the idea that learning is influenced by environment. They perceive that nurture contributes more than nature to the final "product" at least as far as the child's attitude and mind-set are concerned (socialization and psychological health).

> The most important aspect [of a child's overall education] is the mind-set or the attitudes (about learning and about self: most importantly self-esteem) a child forms and develops by observation and by osmosis from the parents and from the whole environment that a child exists in.
>
> By the time a child arrives at school, if you haven't educated him to deal with the world (this seems to mean psychologically) that exists there, then he is in for a lot of trouble. (May.84.PI.B)

The Blaine's appear to be cognizant of the psychological health of their two children and are consciously nurturing it. Carl states, "The father's role is critical. There are very different male and female approaches to basic social interactions." Support for this attitude may depend upon a conviction that there is a biological basis for observed behaviour. On most other issues, he conveys a strong feeling that environment is more influential. This indeed will become part of the environment from which "the child forms and develops by observation and by osmosis."

Mrs. Oliver feels that Andrew is very bright and that he is aware of, and sensitive to, other people's feelings. Andrew's mother describes him as a "Ping-Pong type; random pattern." For most of the meeting time the Merryland Preschool program provides a variety of learning opportunities from which children can choose. This child-centred approach is congruent with the Blaine's perspectives on learning. The Blaine's do not discuss being students of parenting as members of the Cooperative Preschool.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

When Andrew is in Preschool, parent involvement means total commitment to the child's life and the family unit. It is realizing the value and reward of raising happy healthy children. Being informed about child development through reading current literature is important. Day-to-day interaction with the children is basic to parent involvement. There is recognition of parents on special occasions. One-to-one must be planned for to ensure that it happens. Parent involvement means planning and making the most of opportunities. It is looking for schooling and choosing a school with Andrew's personality in mind. It is choosing the neighbourhood and buying a home. There is a responsibility for affective development. There are organizations like Parents Involved in Primary Education (PIPE) in which to be involved. It is monitoring the teaching of values. Parent involvement is "direct" involvement as in being a "helping mom" in the Preschool program. In planning for having the child attend a Kindergarten program, one must have faith in the system and know about the program. Two-way communication is important.

The Blaine Family - Kindergarten Year

Entering Andrew's Learning Environment

Father's Description

Andrew and I are involved in learning experiences all the time. Every time we are alone together we are both conscious of a student-teacher relationship. Andrew asks questions; I respond. I point out an interesting fact; Andrew responds. He tries to think about it. It's a game. It's fun. A specific occurrence. We are all at Sandy's Restaurant. They have an automated water show with a lot of complicated plumbing. Andrew studies this carefully and then makes the observation, "That's just like the sprinkler we have. It moves around." I say, "Yes, that's just the same way a rocket works." Andrew says, "I know." I say, "How do you think they make it all work?" Andrew says, "There's a computer or machine that runs it all." Andrew is now interested in something else.
(April.85.Q.B)

Mother's Description

Today was the last music class for the 1984-1985 year and parents were invited to observe. Mrs. Jasper, the teacher, was reviewing the information the children had learned, with the children demonstrating. At one point, Andrew was asked to play high and low notes along with a song, on a musical instrument not previously used in class. Mrs. Jasper told the class it was a "metalophone." She asked the class to say the word. Andrew repeated "metalophone" very clearly and observed that it sounded like an organ. He didn't play the notes right the first time, but upon repetition, did quite well. Andrew seemed totally absorbed with the experience. Something new--a new word, a new instrument--was extremely interesting to him. He looked bright, alert, inquisitive. This kind of experience is the everyday food for the brain which makes Andrew happy. I was glad to see him enjoying himself; was happy that

> his behaviour, in general, was quite acceptable. I don't view this as a "special moment", particularly, but rather as a routine learning experience typical of the kind that happen many times in a day. (April.85.Q.B)

Blue Lake School Kindergarten Program

The following description is the researcher's account of a morning shared with the Kindergarten children.

As I turn the corner, the school appears. It is red brick and looks quite new. This is a newer neighbourhood. There is a huge iron bell hanging up above the level of the roof. A small school bus stops in front of me and the children get off. There are children riding by on bicycles apparently on their way to the Junior High School a block away.

A low, green metal fence is around the perimeter of the school grounds. A children's playground with climbing apparatus can be seen to the north of the school. Next to that is a community building, perhaps used by skaters in the winter.

I walk through the school to the Kindergarten. I pass an open area arrangement that is used by about twelve classes. The library is at the centre. The Kindergarten classroom is a self-contained, double room. Two "teachers'" names are on the door. I notice children's telephone numbers on a sheet of paper tacked to the door. Each of the connected rooms has a door directly to the outside and a big window beside the door. There are 28 children in this class.

The teacher's Aid arrives. She explains that the whole area is for the one class. She exclaims, "Isn't it wonderful!" It seems that this year they took out the wall between the rooms and moved the Kindergarten program into this room. The Aid has a distinct French accent. She puts down chairs. Children can be heard waiting outside a door that opens into a hallway just outside the room.

The Aid puts down child-made placemats on the tables. These placemats are blotter paper on which the children have put several colours. The colours have been permitted to flow into one another. The Aid checks on who is bringing snack.

The teacher enters the classroom and remarks, "I forgot you were coming." The children come in talking and laughing. Two girls see that they both have pigtails this morning. "Let's show Mme. Zarek." They seem to have a good feeling about sharing special things with her.

The teacher greets individuals with "Bonjour ______." The children are happy and active. They take out things to do in the carpeted areas such as puzzles and books. With a strong clear voice, the Aid interacts directly with the children: answering questions, giving instructions and providing help in clearly enunciated French.

While four children sit in the carpeted area by the piano, other children are still coming in and getting ready. There is much child-child interaction. I speak with another adult who tells me that she is in to help with gymnasium activities, a Tuesday activity for mothers. Children take out materials and use them.

The Aid is giving instructions in French to a child concerning the use of the Listening Centre. While the teacher begins counting in French, the children put things away and move to the carpeted area.

The teacher first goes through, "Un grand papillon, moyen et petit." She uses gestures so the children can more easily understand her. As a group, the children repeat what the teacher has introduced. The teacher uses her own hand-drawn pictures of three sizes of butterflies. She holds up one card at a time. The name of a child is printed on each card. The teacher repeats the same question each time: "A qui le nom?" When a child recognizes his or her name on a card, that child is to respond with a sentence indicating that he or she is present. The children definitely follow what she is doing.

Classroom management is in French and the children understand. The teacher shows a keen awareness of the need to be understood by the children. The children respond individually when they recognize their names: "Le nom est moi. Je suis present(e)." The teacher points out beginning sounds when each name is presented. The teacher comments, "excellent" and "tres bien" thereby rewarding individual effort in a positive way. There are no negative comments.

This instruction includes repetition and individual attention. The atmosphere is very supportive and children show a relaxed, comfortable feeling; not one of performing. The feeling is one of learning together. All the children participate. Some are given help as they are called upon. The limited vocabulary is repeated by many children so a feeling of success is possible.

"Qui est-ce qui est absent?" asks the teacher. The teacher answers her own question. At 9:15, the class joins the English Kindergarten class in the gymnasium for a 30 minute activity referred to as the "Gross Motor Program. The gym is set up with six stations. There are six adults present to help the children: two teachers, two Aids and two parent helpers. At each station there is a laminated sheet of instructions and suggestions for activities. At station 1 the children use the climber. There are bean-bags at station 2, balance benches at station 3, benches and mats used for sliding, rolling and jumping at station 4, different sizes of balls at station 5 and hula hoops at station 6. The French teacher speaks in French and English, seeming to have a good sense of when children would not understand French instructions.

When the children return to the classroom, they talk amongst themselves as they "lave les mains." They sit at tables with their placemats in front of them. Although the lights are turned out it remains light enough for eating and chatting. There is a routine of asking certain questions about the snack that the children have brought. The child whose mother is responsible for the snack, is the one who asks the questions. The lights are turned on again when they begin eating. The children quietly talk to one another in English. The teacher helps the child repeat requests for more food in French.

The teacher asks the Aid how to name the chocolate crunchy food. The Aid asks, "Sucre a la creme?" Andrew seems to recognize the word "creme." He relates that to the chocolate and wants to show this by stating, "I happen to know chocolate usually has milk in it."

Andrew speaks with the teacher in English about a bird that has been made from construction paper and tissue paper. She replies and questions him in French. The children all wash their hands again and put away their place mats.

At 10:00, the children gather together on the carpet. The teacher has a huge piece of cardboard that is bent and has picture cards and French words pinned on it beginning with the letter "v": "ville", "voiture", "valise" and "verre." Four children were to have brought a picture from home of something that starts with "v." The teacher puts the picture into a can with a lid on it. Each of the four children, in turn, asks other children in the class to guess the identity of the picture. All child questions and answers are in French. It is apparent that the questions have been used repeatedly as some students are becoming good at the language. Only complete sentences are used: "Ceci n'est pas la viande." The teacher says to the children, in English, "Remember, these are things that start with "v" in French."

The Aid helps children in another part of the room who were supposed to have brought pictures today but who do not have them. The children were assigned a particular day and parents were asked to help the child.

Everyone sings until recess. The teacher looks for children who are sitting quietly. When she names a child, that child is permitted to leave his or her seat. Robert beams, "I was sitting still as a stone." The children are lined up ready to go out. The Aid helps the four children who are pasting pictures into individual books.

After recess, the children gather around the outside of the carpeted area to watch the teacher demonstrate how to make a butterfly out of construction paper and tissue paper. The chidren have hands up to ask questions. These are answered in turn. This is the time for activity at many Centres.

At the end of class time, some parents meet the children at an outside door. Andrew's mother comes in to ask how many tables are used for snacktime so that she can have the right number of containers.

A field trip is planned for the Kindergarten children the next day. They will see a play of "The Three Little Pigs" in French and will go to the Nature Valley Nature Centre. After the students leave, the principal comes in to talk about the arrangements and costs. The teacher thinks that the "troupe" doing the French play is not very good. She comments, "They don't remember that we can't understand as a Francophone should. But we have to do these things anyway."

The Aid is often very involved in speaking directly with the children. There are many opportunities for interaction one-to-one and in small groups. The Aid's French is a good example for the children. The teacher speaks French very well also.

Teacher's Perspective

As her number one objective Mme. Zarek helps make the child secure in the school. The second major objective is teaching oral French. Andrew's mother remarks that "The teacher's very good at encouraging polite behaviour. . . .She wants everyone to cooperate and [she] teaches them how" (April.85.PI.B).

Mme. Zarek feels that, ideally, responsibility for education should rest with parents. However, she recognizes that in some cases social changes pressure schools into accepting more responsibilities.

Parental support in the "learning part" of the program is important. When children are asked to bring materials for instructional purposes from home, the teacher feels it important that she can rely on parents to help, remind and support the children. Parents are welcome to come in and do whatever they can; whatever they are comfortable doing. A parent committee organizes the ways the parents will be involved. Mme. Zarek accepts that trade-offs will be necessary if there is a need for a parent to be involved "directly" in the classroom even if a younger sibling must come along. This may require a teaching adjustment because of the effect of the younger child's presence on the class. She acknowledges that "If you want them there, and if the child needs them there, then you have to live with whatever the consequences are." She feels the decision is dependent upon "the individual teacher, on the parent and on what the child's needs are." She feels that kids let you know some things but many major considerations that could be affecting the child's learning will be determined only by other means.

Andrew

Andrew's parents describe some developmental changes in Andrew in the past year.

Andrew's father relates:

> He's changed from a five year old to a six year old. And there are a lot of physical changes and developmental changes. He's a lot more independent. Socially more mature. He doesn't want parental involvement quite as much. (April.85.PI.B)

Andrew's mother remarks:

> He's much more responsible for himself personally. He's able to get himself totally dressed. Bathroom is no longer a problem in any way. He can take care of his room. He's much more self-sufficient in terms of taking care of his room. He likes it and is proud of that. . . .He's much more tolerant of younger children than he used to be. A year ago he had to play with somebody his own age or older. He was incapable of any kind of play with younger children. Now it doesn't matter a whole lot to him. He's able to get along with many different ages of children. (April.85.PI.B)

Andrew's mother feels that Kindergarten has made him better able to get along with people. She states, "It's civilized him quite a bit. . . .He's not as bossy or as loud as he used to be." Carl feels that at Kindergarten Andrew has not been challenged "intellectually or academically." It is his feeling that Andrew "just seemed to take it in like a sponge."

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Kindergarten Year

Lois' parenting seems to be more rational than some. She describes Andrew's activities as if they are part of a total plan. Each activity has a place within an all encompassing perspective of which she is consciously aware: a "routine learning experience" is taking place (see Mother's Description, p. 104). Her reference to his behaviour indicates an aspect of parent involvement where the parent feels reponsibility. In the event that his actions are not acceptable, she is "on duty." She expects to effect the learning necessary to eliminate unacceptable behaviour. This aspect of parent involvement of "being on call" is shared by many mothers with children of this age.

Andrew comments to the researcher that "I went to the Space Sciences Centre and my mom and dad came along." Could this be a reflection of his father's iteration this year that Andrew is an "equal" in the family? Carl Blaine suggests that Andrew does not want parental involvement quite as much any more because he's more independent and socially more mature.

Andrew has less time outside of "school" than in the Preschool year. Lois observes, "He's more interested in playing with his peers than [in] spending time with either of us. She feels he enjoys time with them: he "craves" time to play with his friends. Often in the afternoons he is playing with them.

Andrew's behaviour is of a leader who dominates. His parents feel that he knows how to resolve conflict in peer groups using peaceful means. Nonetheless, "He has a tendency to dominate . . . at least he tries to. He's not a follower. He's a leader." Lois Blaine relates that she spends much less time with him now and, "consequently, the time that I do have with him is really quite special."

Carl Blaine does not appear to be conscious of any learning on his part as a result of the interaction between himself and Andrew. Being a student, with the child as teacher, does not appear to be a part of his perception of parent involvement.

The Blaine's chose the school with Andrew's personality in mind. The school has two classes of each grade. His parents feel that potentially there can be a situation where Andrew has a problem getting along with a teacher. Having a second class at any grade level allows the possibility of a teacher change. All this was considered before a house was purchased. The reason for the Blaine's choice of neighbourhood community is illuminated in the teacher's remarks: "For many children in this area . . . attitudes that are conducive to school" exist already.

The Blaine's choose a "French Immersion" Kindergarten program this year because they feel Andrew needs as much stimulation as possible in his "schooling." They do not mention choosing French Immersion to facilitate future job opportunities. Lois explains her perceptions of what he experiences:

> In French Immersion . . . she has to teach the child lots of the things a unilingual child learns between the ages of one and five. You've got to try to get it into their heads in Kindergarten. As a consequence Andrew is exposed to a program that's different from the kind of learning experience he would have at home or playing with friends on the block. (April.85.PI.B)

He has a "school culture."

> He's learning something that somebody has organized for him to learn. He now has a learning curriculum . . . He's in a place where the people and the program and peers we think are healthy. I don't view it as him being taught. He's being allowed and stimulated and encouraged to let his own natural desire to learn, flourish.
>
> Kindergarten specifically has forced him into a social situation everyday. Every morning for five days a week and he has to learn from that how to get along better with people. (April.85.PI.B)

Andrew and his maternal grandfather were together 21 days in the past year. Lois Blaine relates:

> [Andrew's maternal] grandfather is one of Andrew's best friends. He stimulates Andrew intellectually; plays imaginative games with Andrew, word games and presents other "thinking" problems for Andrew to examine. Andrew is less intensely tied to grandpa now than last year since his social horizons have broadened with the Kindergarten experience. Nevertheless, . . . the relationship is intense. (April.85.Q.B)

Andrew's father remarks on changing family dynamics with respect to Andrew and Ivan:

> Andrew and Ivan are individuals in their own right. They have their own rights as people. So [my relationship with Andrew] changes more on Andrew's terms than on mine. It's sort of how he wants it to be.

> Ivan is beginning to exert his influence in the family a lot more than he used to. Andrew is adapting himself to that reasonably well. (April.85.PI.B)

Because Andrew likes to talk, Andrew's mother knows that she needs to be a good listener for his benefit.

> The most important thing is to pay attention to what he's saying and listen carefully. I try to do it as much as I can and still remain sane. It only does him justice . . . if I try to understand what he's done. I have to remind myself to do that and try to do it as much as I can. Essentially what that is, is just loving your child. To me that's the most important thing you can ever do. We end up talking a lot. We always have. I try to answer his questions. I try to pay attention to what he's saying and really understand just exactly what it is that he's trying to communicate. (April.85.PI.B)

The Blaine's talk about one on one as an important part of parent involvement. When running errands on the weekend Carl takes one of the boys so they can talk in the car and perhaps stop off and do something. "We look for ways to do that."

Andrew's father is concerned that Andrew is not athletic. "[I] would like to see him have an interest in some physical activity." His mother expresses this thought, as her perspective, by saying she wants him to "feel more confident with his body." He is encouraged to swim. Carl remarks, "We haven't gone into any formalized programs like soccer but that sort of thing we'll likely do."

Andrew Blaine's teacher feels that values, manners and certain attitudes toward school including the importance of learning and a desire to learn should be addressed at home. This is consistent with how Carl and Lois Blaine see it. Mme. Zarek elaborates on how parents can participate in the program:

> Those parents who can come--they're very welcome to come into the classroom [to] do whatever they can; whatever they are comfortable with. Some [parents] don't like sitting and cutting. Others don't like being in charge of a group; they're intimidated by that. They can take something home or they can read something for me or they can just wander around the classroom and be with their child. (April.85.TI.B)
>
> In the gym we do a gross motor program that involves parents. For that particular morning we require one or two parents. One from the English Kindergarten and one from the French Kindergarten. That's organized right at the beginning of the year. Parents volunteer for that. Often Mondays we have a cooking program. . . .They volunteer for that and come in to cook with the children. (April.85.TI.B)
>
> They also have a committee that's organized and each parent volunteers for a particular responsibility: organizing field trips, organizing the snack program. (April.85.TI.B)

Lois Blaine understands the variety and quantity of "parent involvement" and suggests that it permeates the school. She relates, "It's excellent that way. I really like it." She elaborates:

> I'm fortunate to be the person who makes up the calendars for all three Kindergarten

> classes. So I know pretty well what's going on in the classroom everyday. I volunteered for the job because I wanted that kind of contact and it's been great. It really does keep you in touch. (April.85.PI.B)

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

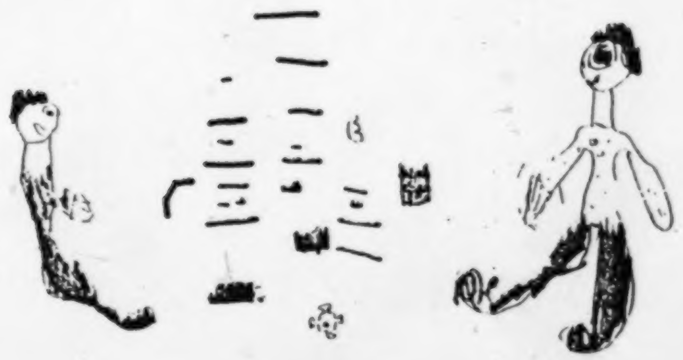
In the Kindergarten year, the Blaine's express concern about the amount of time Andrew has with each parent. This year it is less with his mother but with his father it is about the same. Listening to Andrew continues to be important to them. Concerns surface about Andrew's athletic ability or, perhaps, physical development. The parents feel that this needs to be encouraged even though Andrew hasn't shown a particular interest in sports. Planned one on one time continues to be a priority. Parent involvement is helping the chidren understand what it means to be a cooperating family member. The mother sees her role changing in that she does not "teach" as many things now but, instead, is a social convener, juice maker and chauffeur. Parent involvement means recognizing and allowing for "a little bit more of an equal relationship" between Andrew and a parent. The mother has "direct contact" with the class. The teacher is quite comfortable with parents frequently coming and going according to student's and parent's perceived needs. Parent involvement is being on the LAC which arranges for field trips and parties. Funds are collected and dispersed through this group. Parents participate as leaders in the gross motor program and kindercooking. Parent-teacher communication is important. One major means for ensuring that these parents are informed is Lois' volunteer assistance to make calendars for the three Kindergarten classes.

The Blaine Family - Grade One Year

Andrew's Book

These are Andrew's recollections of important happenings throughout his Grade One year.

> On Mondays I have Beavers and yesterday was music. My dad helps at Beavers.
>
> If mom and dad didn't do things for me, at least I'd have the TV and the computer.
>
> When I was in Kindergarten my mom used to do the calendars. Now that I'm in Grade One she only comes to talk to my teacher once in awhile.



> Me and my dad are building things out of Construx (see illustration above). I have five sets of Construx, so me and him can build a lot of things. For Hallowe'en I was the Construx alien. He is totally purple with yellow eyes.

> Outside of school I play with my friend, John.
>
> At home you've got a lot of stuff you can do. At school you "gotta" do WORK! And it teaches you. TV can teach you things.
>
> My mom always asks me, "Was school fun?" And I'll say, "Yaaas." If I don't tell her she says, "Come on Andrew."
>
> I like testing the cooking my mom does.
>
> When my brother starts bugging me I just say, "Ivan quit bugging me." We play something like tag. We run around the house and through the living room. I sometimes use cushions and I make it like an obstacle course. I jump over and Ivan just walks over. (March.84)

Blue Lake School Grade One Program

The classroom is part of an "open area design." To enter the room it is necessary for an adult to duck to get under charts at the "doorway." Complete elimination of visual contact from the adjoining classroom is accomplished by dividers, storage shelves and a playhouse. Wires strung across the ceiling between opposite corners of the room have paperclips on them. Craft work hangs from these clips. An array of unique butterflies made from heart shapes are hanging--Valentines. There are twenty-six students in this class.

On the top of the coat rack near the carpeted area there is a display of child-constructed "voyageur ships" made from "beautiful junk." Neat Ships! On the walls of this "learning space" hang pictures from a variety of contexts. Words are displayed beside the pictures giving good exposure to print, with the visual available to help the learning.

One Morning Session

Children's chatter seems to gently push students down the hallway and into the room. A boy is the first one in. "I'm the first one in!" he brags to another child. He repeats this to the next three or four boys who appear. While waiting for the others to get as far into the room as he, he was singing a song in French--"Soleil . . ." The children take down the chairs. They interact and prepare for learning. Andrew peeks through the toque that is pulled down to cover his forehead. He has a look that indicates he recognizes me.

As the buzzer sounds, a girl is erasing the blackboard. Andrew takes his seat. The teacher, Mme. Marceau, sits on a child's desk near the front of the room. She is speaking to many children, each in turn. Sometimes the children answer in English, but many times in French.

The teacher calls out names; the children respond. A father appears, ducking to look under the charts at the entry. He gets a child's attention and gives him a bag. It is not disruptive. Inside is a library book. The teacher exchanges words with the student and he takes it to the library.

Andrew has a calculator in his desk. He looks at his wrist watch while he works with this calculator in his desk.

The teacher instructs the children to gather in the rug area. "Je veux etre attendu," urges the teacher. Then she asks in French, "Is St. Patrick's Day a party of Canada?" The teacher uses Gilligan's Island to get responses to a question about what is around an island: "de l'eau." In a calendar-related activity, children take turns asking the others questions. For example, "Quel jour est-il?" There is a graph of the temperatures for the month. The teacher exclaims, "Il fait plus chaud." Andrew is asked the temperature question for today. He replies, "Moins trois." A child moves a pointer from the middle of a wheel to indicate the right season.

Later, Mme. Marceau does a lot of talking. Children seem to understand her. They tell of experiences in English: about going to California, being at the farm, about a TV program and ghosts. One girl shows a toy duck that she pushes causing the feet to flop.

The teacher asks what celebration is on March 17th. A child answers that it is winter's birthday. In French the teacher queries, "Winter's Birthday?" Then she says, "Le dix-sept est la fete de St. Patrice."

At 9:15 the chidren form two groups. The group that Andrew is in gathers in another room with a different teacher. Andrew is given sheets of paper stapled together. The written instructions are, "Choisis la syllabe qui complete le mot." The children pick the correct syllable to go with the incomplete words including: le grand ______, la _____ lancoire and la _______ teine.

Andrew yawns. "Qu'est-ce que c'est?" he asks while pointing to something on the page. The teacher elicits answers from students and ensures all the children have the correct responses. Andrew concentrates and works with confidence. On one sheet, he is to drawn lines from a picture to the appropriate vocabulary word. Andrew checks with his neighbours. The children are challenged to understand the teacher's words. Her talk seems to be at a level above what they could be expected to comprehend completely, thus providing an opportunity for extention.

Later, Andrew and the teacher converse. He points and nods that he has successfully completed the work. "The picture's right beside it, so it's easy." He looks at another boy's work and realizes this boy is doing something different. He tells the teacher. The teacher tells him not to follow what this child is doing. Andrew reports that Mark is doing it that way as well.

Andrew understands well what is spoken but does not appear anxious to practise orally as part of the group. He does not appear to be as sure of himself as some.

Back in the regular classroom Andrew uses his calculator at his desk. He raises his hand high to answer a teacher's question. An example of a question and answer is:

T: Quand il fait du vent?

S: Je marche avec un elephant!

Finally the teacher asks Andrew to respond. He still has his hand up but he doesn't have an answer and states, "It just popped out of my head." He is able to think of an answer quickly.

At 10:00 Andrew continues to work with his calculator. He remains attentive while he is working with it. He puts his hand up in response to the teacher's question when it appears to the researcher that he is also attending to the calculator.

Questions are on the chalkboard and children supply answers. Examples include:

T: Quand le ciel est bleu?

S: Je fait un jeu.

T: Quand il neige?

S: J'aime la couleur beige.

Andrew seems anxious to read some of the work they have just produced on the blackboard. At the same time he is playing with the calculator in his desk. The teacher notices him looking down and seems to realize that he is not watching; that there is something else that has his attention.

After recess, the teacher uses the overhead projector to give a Math lesson in addition and subtraction.

When Andrew believes that there is something wrong with the way the teacher writes a particular number sentence, he tries to tell her in French but can not find the words to make himself understood. He relies on others to revert to English to explain to her what he wants her to know. She explains in French why she put it that way. Andrew seems to think he must not speak in English, but Mme. Marceau seems flexible in most instances. He usually will not go on if he can not think of how to say it in French.

Andrew has both of his shoes off and he plays with them with his toes. He yawns and puts his head down on his arms.

The children have some trouble attending this long. Mme. Marceau moves to a more abstract representation using dots. It seems this is less interesting to the children. The teacher is commenting 'Ce n'est pas difficile." Andrew is nodding madly in agreement.

Later, the teacher introduces a story to half the class who sit on the rug. Andrew works hard to contribute some knowledge as to what this story will be about. He is now blowing into the pages of the reader and creating a sound but does not continue this until it is an annoyance. It seems he does it out of interest. He is intrigued with what is produced. Andrew seems to expect to know things before he has learned about them. He lies on his back and listens to another child read. He follows along while pushing his book up and down.

Moments later, Andrew is ready to answer questions. He holds the book under his feet and pulls up on it under his feet. The teacher explains a workbook activity. Andrew states a sentence in French and the teacher picks up on it expanding the thought. The children go to their desks to do the workbook activity. Andrew asks for, and gets more direction from Mme. Marceau.

Andrew seems to have no children he is close to. Andrew, as most others, does not seem to be able to proceed without one-to-one help. It appears he will not proceed unless he is certain he will do it right. The workbook exercise appears to be at the frustration level.

As all the children gather on the rug, Andrew and Neil have arms around one another's shoulders. The teacher demonstrates a craft project. The children are to glue the shamrock pattern on construction paper and cut it out. They make accordion-type arms and legs. The children are active at this for about twenty minutes until the noon buzzer sounds. Andrew puts his materials away, collects his calculator and heads out. The teacher offers, "Bon appetit" to the children as they are dismissed individually.

Teacher's Perspective

Mme. Marceau explains her background as a teacher in primary education and her resulting perceptions of education at this level:

> I was very reticent after I had spent six years in Kindergarten, to leave Kindergarten, to go to teach Grade One. But now that I'm here I'm very, very fond of it. First of all I think that I have an idea of where childen are once they leave Kindergarten and I don't think that Kindergarten and Grade One are two separate things. I think it should be a continuous thing. I think there should be a transition and just a movement onwards rather than an immediate jump in to sitting in desks and being quiet all of the time--particularly in Immersion where you must talk. (March.86.TI.B)

She states her most important objective is to ensure that the children are "working at a level that is comfortable for them and to feel success no matter what someone else is doing in the classroom." She explains that because it is an Immersion program communication is particularly important. Mme. Marceau explains:

> The children must speak. They must practise speaking--have the chance to make mistakes and learn to take their risk and be comfortable with it. Throw a word in, in English and keep going. When you speak and you have oral vocabulary, then as well you've got a background for reading. The children realize the connection between what you say and what is written down. The connection between language and the printed word. And definitely listening. They have

> to listen in order to acquire a second language. You can't be in outer space, because you really have to listen all the time. Now every child has a different way of listening, I realize that. But listening and speaking are incredibly important. Everything is the acquisition of vocabulary in an Immersion classroom. Math, Science, Social Studies . . . they all are really embellishments to Language Arts. So, essentially, your whole day is Language Arts. (March.86.TI.B)

Mme. Marceau gives insight into her conception of "curriculum."

> I suppose the typical thing is you are supposed to say the curriculum [goals are the objectives]. But the curriculum is sort of . . . it is important in that . . . for your school and for the School Board, I guess. In order to maintain norms you must cover it, yes. I plan and certainly don't just leave it on the shelf without opening it, but that really comes after all of those other things. Those other things are priorities and if perchance you haven't covered something, I think you communicate it to the teacher at the next level, and that's fine. As I say, I don't think Kindergarten and Grade One are separate entities. Nor should the Grade Two be the following year. Curriculum content is fine. If you don't have it covered, well I don't think it's the end of the world. And I don't see much difficulty with covering most curriculum within the year. Usually you try and extend it and elaborate it and enrich it. (March.86.TI.B)

Mme. Marceau hopes that parents are comfortable phoning or just checking in for informal conversation outside of school time. If parents as a group are coming in she prefers they facilitate the child doing something as opposed to her laying something on for the kids. The latter was the case in the only opportunity for Lois Blaine to be involved this year. The teacher conveys the attitude that since children are supposed to have the day immersed in the French language, most of the parents (non-Francophones) would not be suitable models for the children to interact with in the program. Parents can offer suggestions. They should be responsible for providing experiences that make reading relevant such as visits, shopping trips, going to the zoo. There have been no field trips.

The teacher expresses ambivalence as she ponders her idea that parent involvement is not referring to an experience that is "second-hand." She has taught in Kindergarten and feels parent involvement is easier to handle there. She feels that one of the most satisfying things about teaching Kindergarten is the constant communication between parents and teacher. She feels parents should be involved with the teacher in what she is trying to accomplish and in knowing what her interests are. She states that phone calls--getting back to people immediately--and notes back and forth are ideal. The degree to which Lois Blaine feels informed about Andrew's school experience in the Grade One year is significantly reduced in comparison to the Kindergarten and Preschool years. She does not seem to have a rapport with Mme. Marceau or a "routine" in place that allows for easy communication.

Andrew Blaine's teacher describes an interaction with him:

> I was trying to introduce the explorers coming to North America; coming to the New World. The idea that people weren't sure yet that--did not know that the world was a sphere. We had been talking about spheres in Geometry and Science. The idea that they thought they would fall off the edge of a flat surface into outer space or hell or something to that effect. And I tried to get the children to tell . . . I said, "A long time ago, before there were people other than the Indians and Inuit in Canada, people in Europe didn't know that anything existed here, but they didn't travel very far in their ships because there were legends and terrible stories that if you went very far there were these terrible sea monsters and these terrible things would happen." And I pointed out that there were all these different countries in Europe and there were these different kings and someone thought that there must be something else so they had to come here. And so it was, a long time ago. (March.86.TI.B)
>
> Andrew said, "Oh yes." But before he said "Oh yes." I could see the wheels going.
>
> And someone else said, "When I was really small. When I was one."
>
> I said, "No. Longer ago than that."
>
> Someone else said, "When my mother was a child."
>
> I said, "No, longer ago than that."
>
> And Andrew says, "I've got you. It was a really long time ago when we all started in the ocean and everything was sort of like little fish." That's how he described it. "And then they started to change into fish and into whales and after a long time there were all kinds of animals and gorillas." And he started to explain the evolution of man.

> And I stopped him and I said, "Yes, that's right Andrew, but not that long ago."
>
> And he smiled and said, "Oh . . . Oh I see." He continued though sort of talking about the monkeys though. About how we're like monkeys like with hands. He stops when he's told. In a sense . . . he acknowledges your presence. He really just wants to finish his story. I think it's perhaps frustrating, although he did then realize what I was in fact talking about. A long time ago being the kings and queens and Christopher Columbus and that sort of thing. He wanted . . . I think he was very much interested in finishing what he had started to talk about. He seemed still very caught up in what it was he was trying to explain. I think he might have felt disappointed that he didn't quite get it right on? The feeling part is very hard. He gets quite quiet if you say, "No, that's not quite what I had in mind." In other similar situations I sometimes find he doesn't always collect all the information before he starts talking. It's like in a riddle; you don't wait for all of the clues. Like there's people on quiz shows who push the button before they've heard all of the clues. He jumps the gun a little bit. I think . . . he definitely gets very quiet. He doesn't seem to be upset. Perhaps disappointed? Disappointed in me that I didn't give him all the right clues to start with? It wasn't intended to trick him. I think he feels unhappy about giving up the floor or just taking a break, or even just stopping a moment to roll himself forward to where we are. It think it's probably unsettling for him. I remember the look on his face. He's quite willing to conform, to try to realize what it was we we're doing. He does seem taken aback and I guess just a little bit crestfallen and a little unhappy. (March.86.TI.B)

She stops him! She speaks about him and remarks, "I remember the look on his face." She pauses and adds, "He's quite willing to conform." Consciously, it seems, she wants "normalization" on the part of students. But "he does seem taken aback and I guess just a little crestfallen and a little unhappy." It seems there is an encroachment upon development of positive feelings of self-worth. It appears his action knowledge (Barnes, 1975) was not congruent with her action knowledge and hers was "right." The researcher is not aware of the teacher sharing this information with the parent. The teacher speaks as if uneasy or not understanding his actions here very well. It is certain the parents could help her "know" what her actions mean to Andrew.

Andrew

Carl Blaine observes that Andrew "does very well with auditory input."

> I think that's why he was so tuned into TV when he was younger. It just had so much information that he was interested in learning. . . .He has very good conceptualizing skills or capabilities. He can mentally visualize things quite easily. . . .He can extrapolate quite well and he enjoys that. (March.86.PI.B)

Lois adds to this understanding:

> He doesn't mind listening very carefully to something to find out how to do it or to gain new information. I can see that other children are not all that way. So he thrives in a very old-fashioned type classroom situation where the teacher stands up and says things to the kids and the kids are supposed to learn it. (March.86.PI.B)

Most of the children in Andrew's Kindergarten class from the previous year are in the other Grade One class as many of the parents specifically asked for the other teacher. As a result, he has few close friends in his class. His mother feels that Andrew had some difficulty adjusting to the situation. She elaborates:

> He was sort of an outsider in this class to begin with. All these other boys had sort of formed their circle of friends and they knew each other and he was not immediately welcomed into that group and he was essentially, just by the physical barrier, excluded from his friends. He didn't see as much of them. So, it's been a struggle for him I think. (March.86.PI.B)

This is the third year in a row that he has been put into a class where almost all of the students are unfamiliar to him. She goes on to explain the dynamics of the situation:

> His drive, maybe, to be accepted by this other group of kids is maybe not so great because of John. He has a best friend and he doesn't need to have someone from the class over. . . .He still plays with the kids from the other class [at recess]. (March.86.PI.B)

Lois feels that he does not feel as much of a need to make friends in his class because a new boy, John, moved into the neighbourhood. She describes Andrew's neighbourhood friendship with John:

> John moved in and they were fast friends. They just seemed to have a lot of similar interests and enjoyed playing the same kinds of games. That friendship really blossomed last spring and last summer. (March.86.PI.B)

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Grade One Year

Andrew's father feels that Andrew has the ability to mentally visualize well. He feels he learns "intuitively" which seems to mean he requires only abstract representation. Carl explains:

> He doesn't have to have hands-on experiences before he understands something. I think that's why he was so tuned into TV when he was younger. (March.86.PI.B)

As coordinators of his total education, Andrew's parents are aware of personality conflicts or socializing conflicts because of his personality. Lois elaborates:

> He has a tendency to be quite bossy and domineering and I think it's not easy for him to be accepted with that personality trait. We do our best to encourage him not to be that way. (March.86.PI.B)

They are aware that "the playgound is a great educator." Part of their involvement is to analyze and make efforts to understand the child's behaviour. They explain:

> Andrew very much wants to take charge of everything. If he's dealing with another child who's like that, then he doesn't have a problem. They'll work it out. But in a situation where he's dealing with less assertive kids, they tend to draw back. There was quite a good group of kids last year who . . . were not marshmallows. . . .They were all really gung ho. They didn't have a problem with each other because they could all stand up to each other. (March.86.PI.3)

Lois feels "happy and sad" that schooling, peers and extracurricular activities are resulting in the situation where she and Andrew share less time together. She writes:

> [I am] happy that he is going out on his own more, developing and growing up, but sad to not have him around more (classic mother's dilemma). We still have a warm, friendly relationship. (March.86.Q.B)

Parent involvement for Lois means less direct involvement with Andrew. Her time with Andrew is less. Parent involvement is observing, feeling for your child because you know him well. It is discussing the situation with him and deciding what is best for him. Lois relates:

> Andrew can not swim well. His teacher . . . likes to "push" her students along by spending lots of time in deep water. On the fourth day of class, she and her students are again in the diving pool. Andrew was in a life jacket. She asked them to jump off the diving board. Andrew tried hard to jump but was obviously quite scared. He got a lot of flak from the older kids. Needless to say I was very upset. I don't like pulling Andrew out of a program because I fear he may get the idea that whenever anything is hard, it's okay to quit. However, I felt he was trying very hard to survive in this course and I was concerned that he may have developed a real hatred of swimming if he continued. I discussed all this with Andrew. His major objection was the teenagers (two boys and one girl) in the class who were impatient with him. Consequently, we did not continue. (March.86.Q.B)

Andrew can gain comfort in the knowledge that his mother knows this situation through firsthand observation. He understands that she respects him by discussing the situation with him and that she acts in his best interest. Healthy development (advocacy) requires that she observe what is happening. This situation is not possible in the Grade One program.

Lois Blaine explains the difference in how Andrew spends his day this year:

> Andrew's time with me (mother) is gradually becoming less. This past year he started to school all day. Plus, more extracurricular activites and friends occupy Andrew's time. (March.86.PI.B)

The Blaine's like "insulated suburbia." Their concern is for a secure and supportive environment for Andrew. Carl relates:

> We shopped around for that school 'cause we thought that it would be right for our kid. We chose where we live because of the schools. So we're happy with the choices. We're dealing in quite a homogenous group in this area. You don't have a lot of conflict of philosophy about what a school should be. And everybody's fairly happy with each other, I think. (March.86.PI.B)

Carl Blaine feels one has to be realistic about what "schooling" will provide.

> There are several things about the whole interaction with the school. I think there's far too much expected of schools in a lot of ways. When it comes down to your child, there's a lot of personal involvement in making sure that you get the best. And school is run by people, and people who have their own limitations. I think there's far too much generally expected of what should be happening.
>
> The school is there to provide a healthy, safe environment for learning. They're there to provide professionally trained people to teach or to provide access to information. The motivation to learn rests with the individual and not with the school.

> School is a resource that's there and it's really up to the individual to take advantage of it. I basically view the school as a passive rather than an active factor. The child is the active factor and the parent. The main function of the school is to provide an adequate environment; not [to] put any impediments in the way of learning. And if you go a little bit more philosophical, it's to implement society's consensus in what should be taught. So our schools, as a tool of our society, provide an environment for our children to learn what we want them to learn, ultimately. Whether it works that way or not is another thing. (March.86.PI.B)

The Blaine's seem to not know as much about the teacher's actions and philosophy this year as they have in previous years. However, Lois is glad that Andrew has this teacher rather than the other Grade One teacher because of Andrew's personality:

> I'm actually pleased that he's in her class as opposed to the other teacher's class because I think she's much more suited to a child with his personality. When we went in for the parent interview, she was very positive. She seemed to like Andrew. She liked having him in her class. (March.86.PI.B)

Teacher-parent interviews do not have much value as far as the father is concerned. He relates:

> I think teachers are very much on the defensive in a parent-teacher interview. They're very much "on." So I don't give a lot of weight to what you get out of a parent-teacher interview. It's basically a public relations exercise on the part of the teacher. They're trying to get through the interview. [That] is the teacher's basic objective. . . .Any teacher doesn't know the parent. It's one of the most hazardous parts of the year for them and it makes them nervous. They're not behaving naturally in that situation. So I didn't get anything

> negative [about Andrew] out of it. You'd look for something unusual. (March.86.PI.B)

Communication does seem limited. On one occasion the teacher makes a comment and mother worries about it. Lois elaborates:

> When I went in . . . about the Carnival . . . she made a random comment to me. She said, "I dont know what's going on in Andrew's life now, but there must be something exciting going on at home, because he's really having trouble in class." And I thought to myself, "If he's having trouble in class, why didn't you contact me? If it's something worth saying to me, why was I not contacted?" I sat and worried about that for a long time and probably came down way too hard on Andrew for this remark that was sort of off-the-cuff. I don't know. I probably over reacted to it. (March.86.PI.B)

The father indicates that he is not aware of how reduced the mother's contact with the teacher is becoming:

> F: You see the teacher routinely.
>
> M: No, I don't. Not nearly as routinely as I did last year.
>
> F: But routinely. You see her twice a month. You at, least, see her.
>
> M: Probably not that frequently. Whereas last year, I would always walk up to the classroom and wait for Andrew to come out and you'd always see the expression on the kids' faces as they walked out and you'd see the teacher everyday. You'd have some contact with her. Now, Andrew walks out to the car by himself and I don't see him in the classroom setting like I did last year. (March.86.PI.B)

Compared with the Kindergarten year, Carl Blaine seems to be putting more faith in Andrew, himself:

> I feel that the best way to assess Andrew's involvement in school is by his attitude really. And it's very positive. He enjoys school. He looks forward to going. And it's very clear when he's had a bad day. He can't really conceal his feelings and he'll mope around and he won't tell you directly why. Some big kids pushed him around or did something. It becomes quite clear. He's enthusiastic about Mme. Kruger. And he's very perceptive about people too. If there was a problem there, I think it would become evident very quickly. (March.86.PI.B)

There is no feeling for a continuum in the learning environments inside and outside the school. Articulation of methods and student achievement across grades seems to be effected by this teacher, but articulation of opportunites for parent involvement in that part of the child's education that happens at school is not maintained over the grades.

This teacher seems to restrict parent access to the classroom to times when class is not in session. Her perception is that "Parents seem to feel pretty much at ease just coming into the classroom, be it after school or waiting for children at noon hour [italics added] when they sometimes pick them up."

Mme. Marceau explains the limitations of her knowledge of the home environment:

> I haven't been in many of the homes of the children in my class this year. So I think in that way, there's probably quite a bit that I don't know. It's more or less fitting a jigsaw puzzle together. But I'm sure, to see a child in his home setting,

> would give you a really complete picture. If we were able to do that. (March.86.TI.B)

There seems to be real dissonance or unsettledness conveyed in the teacher's talk about parent involvement:

> I guess parent involvement is when the parent feels . . . knows . . . has an idea what's going on in the child's day-to-day school life and they feel comfortable going into the school. I guess that involvement really means that they should be there, doesn't it? When I think of it, involvement doesn't seem like a secondhand word. When I think of it, the parents aren't "involved" if they aren't there and taking a part when the children are learning, in fact, for a major part of the day. So I guess, perhaps it becomes secondhand [with the child's school experience] but when there are things such as field trips and other activites that they can volunteer for, they have a chance to come and be a part. Granted [that is] only a limited number of occasions. (Lois Blaine was able to participate once--at a pancake breakfast.) (March.86.TI.B)

> I think the ideal place for parent involvement, and the level at which it just seems to be easier to handle it all, is Kindergarten. And parents always seem really excited and really happy to come in, in Kindergarten. . . . [Parent involvement is] involvement not only with the child and what he's doing and how he perceives the universe, but involvement with the teacher and what she's trying to accomplish. What are her interests? (March.86.TI.B)

At the same time the mother feels "less comfortable." because she feels she would like to know more about Andrew's school experience in the Grade One program.

> My only experience was this past week. I went in to help make pancakes during a lunch break. That was the only time. There's one mother who is the sort of helping mom. It doesn't rotate. She's there for all party

> days. But she's the only one really who has a contact on a sort of a continuing basis. (March.86.PI.B)
>
> Yes, [I have felt like I'd like to go into the classroom]. I haven't asked her. I'm hesitant to do it in a way because I think that it would probably upset Andrew. I don't think very many other mothers go in. And I don't want to bug him either. . . .[There is no parent organization] at this level. There was for Kindergarten. . . .[At least] I was never approached and I was never told of any meetings. (March.86.PI.B)
>
> I feel less comfortable about [knowing about what goes on in the classroom] this year than I did last year. I don't feel that I'm as welcome in the classroom as I was last year. And I don't know if it's appropriate for me to be going in as much. I mean, that's very disruptive to the class when a parent goes up and . . . So I feel a little bit uncomfortable about that. Not as comfortable as I was last year. (March.86.PI.B)

Being in a French Immersion program is a factor in parent involvement because there is potential for less sharing of environments. First, the child gains considerable "relevant knowledge of the language." The child experiences more French while parents' knowledge of French does not increase. Consequently, supplementing, tutoring and sharing can be very difficult. Second, parent participation in the program environment is less likely to be initiated by professional educators if other teachers feel as this teacher seems to feel; that is, parents who are present in the classroom must speak to the children in French. The teacher states that "Since the children are supposed to have their day in French, some years you get parents who speak French and feel comfortable enough with the language to come in." This seems to infer that Anglophone parent helpers would go counter to the philosophy of the program.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

For the Blaine's in the Grade One year, parent involvement is trusting one's child. It is having total responsibility for child rearing. It is deciding on and getting your child involved in programs. It is respecting his independence and understanding and respecting his view of the world. It is routine contact with Andrew on a daily basis. It is ensuring there is regular one on one time with each parent. With the extended school day, time with mother is reduced. The parents now consider there to be a "curriculum" for learning. This year parent involvement means that at no time is either parent present in the classroom when the children are involved in the program. A program of Immersion in the French language seems to carry with it a requirement that adults present be able to speak to the children in French. There is less communication between parent and teacher. During the interview the father becomes aware that the mother is not speaking with the teacher routinely (about once a week) as he thought she was. The Blaine's attend parent-teacher interviews but the father expresses the feeling that they are a public relations exercise that must not be taken too seriously in terms of getting any real understanding of the learning environment the child is experiencing. There is no parent organization. Parents rely on (perhaps are forced into) an assessment of their child's attitude as a major indicator of the effectiveness or appropriateness of the program for Andrew. However, parents are pleased that Andrew has this teacher because they feel she is more compatible with his personality.

The Emmerson Family - Preschool Year

Matthew

Matthew is four years old; he will be five in November. His two brothers are nine (Lorne) and seven years old (Allan).

Matthew gropes for a meaningful answer to the question: Whom do you like to play with? After unconvincingly suggesting his mother and Lorne his voice seems to be backed by a strong and good feeling when he states, "Playing cards with my dad. That's my favourite thing" (May.84.CI.E). The Preschool teacher, having at one time stayed with the boys to give Ruth and Bob Emmerson time away from the children (the first time in seven years), realizes the maturity of Matthew's cognitive abilities through card playing. Games are an integral part of the father's involvement with the children.

Ruth Emmerson's background in teacher education causes her to be concerned that Matthew is not old enough to go to Kindergarten in the fall. He has a friend, Billy, whom his mother describes as a "soul mate." Billy is one month younger but his parents have not considered at all that he should not go to Kindergarten in the fall. Matthew is described by his mother as being torn and somewhat confused "because he's in a situation where he's with older kids in our family all the time and yet his playmates are socially young" (May.84.PI.E). The friends he plays with most are Billy and a boy who is over a year younger than Matthew. Matthew's mother feels they are both socially less mature than Matthew, whom she considers possibly socially less mature than many of his schoolmates.

The Preschool teacher knows the Emmerson's well. She has shared in activities with Matthew in his own home. Her knowledge of Matthew is evident when she remarks that "He's used to playing in a situation where the adults have set limits as to what's fair and what isn't." The fact that she "worked with him on a one to one basis for a whole Saturday" appears to have influenced her degree of confidence in recommending Matthew for Kindergarten. "I had an insight into what he was capable of . . . much more than he did in his play." She relates:

> He needs perhaps, amongst his friends, more of a challenge intellectually. His parents are concerned that he's immature for his age

> but as far as his capabilities, I strongly recommended Kindergarten because I think he will blossom when he is with equal aged and equal intellectual ability [children]. (May.84.TI.E)

Ruth and Bob Emmerson

Ruth sees herself as being more involved in what is happening in her children's lives than most parents. She is moved to advocacy for her children by what she describes as a "very strong parenting feeling." Wanting the best teachers for her three boys and trying to ensure healthful learning environments that are up to her standards have consumed a lot of her parenting time and energy. The psychological well-being of the boys in all things including schooling is the major focus of her intervention for child advocacy.

The Emmerson's have lived in four different places since Matthew was born. Within the last year they have bought a home and intend to be settled where they are presently living for some time.

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Preschool Year

Matthew is the youngest in the family. In the first year of the study, his "schooling" needs are not often visualized in the parents' discussions of parent involvement. Both parents talk at length about experiences they have had in connection with the two older boys' schooling. Ruth Emmerson expresses a concern that she must be careful not to "downplay" the other two boys' needs and interests when making "schooling" decisions; to, instead, make decisions concerning the younger two boys based upon their needs and not on the basis of the first child's needs. Ruth describes her thoughts and hindsight about child raising. She has some regrets but is resigned to the reality of parenting.

> It wasn't that he was lost in the shuffle . . . [but] maybe, because of fatigue from other areas of my life, I wasn't doing as many individual things with Matthew as I should have been. That's kind of a feeling that I have. I guess what I should have been doing was treating him as an only child or as my first born, and I wasn't. (May.84.PI.E)

> We worked harder with Lorne (eldest) than we worked with Allan in his reading. It's a matter again of time and placement. It's not that it's become less of a priority. It's . . . it's . . . with you first child. it's . . . it's . . . the initial experiencing. And with the succeeding children you have to make sure. . . .Like with Matthew, like we said . . . in some years I've jacked myself up and said, "Hey! Remember this." (May.84.PI.E)

Mrs. Emmerson speaks of Matthew's interaction with his older brothers. "Lorne is often doing his own thing. . . .He tends to tease the younger ones . . . [and] can be super with Matthew but seldom spontaneously plays with him." Allan is seen as "a giving and sharing child [who] usually hates to see others hurt or disappointed." Because of a three and a half year spread, "They struggle to understand a level of cooperative play which will work for them."

Mrs. Emmerson is the "family counsellor." She orchestrates the dynamics of family members into each day's agenda that includes lunchtime and after school. The Emmerson's speak of the "dynamics" between the boys "who tend to grate on one another." The parents perceive that each child is unique in terms of interests, actions, and reactions to situations and other family members. Mrs. Emmerson takes these individual qualities into account when planning the day's activities. This comes across as an important part of parent involvement--consciously addressed. Bob supports Ruth in her efforts but the orchestration required to provide what is considered to be best is mainly seen as part of Ruth's parenting role--her responsibility. Because she is with the boys for more time than her husband, it is more often her responsibility.

Ruth Emmerson mentions that Lorne was slow to make friends with a neighbourhood boy because her son was going to a school outside the neighbourhood. This situation developed because the Emmerson's "shop" for "schooling," made possible by school district policy. In retrospect, Bob Emmerson regards this "shopping" aspect of parent involvement as somewhat overwhelming. He indicates that "It can turn into a real zoo." Ruth Emmerson looks back with regret on some decisions such as one that placed her older boys into an out-of-neighbourhood school. Despite taking her responsibility seriously and interviewing the principal, the school situation for both children did not work out to their satisfaction.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

Part of parent involvement for Ruth Emmerson is being home at noon and after school as the family counsellor. She takes her job of "homemaker" seriously. Both parents feel parent involvement requires that one parent not be working outside the home. Parent involvement means being realistic about the quality of teaching the children will experience for the duration of their schooling. They consciously reflect upon the way birth order affects the nature of parent involvement and the contexts for family involvement. Parent involvement is making oneself visible at school. It is being friends with the teacher. The emphasis at home is on development of social behaviour. It is being aware of what is being done in school so that out-of-school (home) activities can complement school learning. Parent involvement can mean informing the teacher that a child is upset thereby protecting the child. Ruth says she has coached parents to be advocates for their own children. Parent involvement is participating in parent-teacher interviews. It is "counting losses" and moving children to another school when it is a parent's perception that a small group of parents are being obstructive to the point where it affects a child's school experience. After having been "shoppers" for good teachers throughout the years that the older boys have been in school, the Emmerson's now feel that parent involvement in schooling requires that you pick the group of parents with whom you will be involved. Based upon experience it is the Emmerson's perception that there needs to be a consistency in the attitude of the parent group as a whole. Parent involvement is making decisions about schooling. Home-schooling is ruled out by the father because he feels the dynamics of the boys would make it impossible. The mother feels the children need exposure to teachers having different interests, approaches and individual natures.

The Emmerson Family - Kindergarten Year

Redwood School Kindergarten Program

The room feels open. One meter high dividers section the room into different areas. There are large areas where vision is not restricted. The following centres can be identified: Reading, Puzzle, Math-Science, House, Sand, Water, Painting and Activity Table.

Through the window I can see the Kindergarten teacher outside. She is on supervision and stands with crossed arms to ward off the cold. She is speaking to a child while other adults stand close by. The mood is one of friendly conversation and she affectionately pulls a student's coat closed.

A gentle gong sounds. Is that the bell? It sounds again, and again I am pleasantly surprised. What a nice bell! The principal comes into the Kindergarten room to assist because the Kindergarten teacher is on supervision. "Mrs. Kruger would like to see how many of you can put away your own coats."

The teacher comes down the hall holding the hand of one student. One child makes her way down the hall supported by a crutch. Two friends walk slowly with her. The children put away their coats and several come directly to the carpeted area where there is a circle drawn. They sit on the line forming the circle. Many of the children have something with them that they have brought from home. The teacher puts on Raffi music on a tape player. She checks for library books that have been brought back to school. It seems that she wants to make sure that all books that were brought this morning are placed in the proper place so as not to be lost. Some children linger, talking in the coat area.

Mrs. Kruger begins and the 16 children join in to sing a "Hello" song. The children know that this is a signal that they are to come to the circle area. The teacher introduces me. She encourages the children to tell about the things they have with them and then to put them in their "mail boxes."

Through the sharing time, the teacher talks much more than the children. There is much to be done in the way of daily routine procedures. They have to be done before they can go to the gym. Hurrying the children to complete the activities, the teacher mentions that the Grade Threes are wanting to get into the gym and there will not be much time for them if they do not hurry. The children provide little oral description as they show those things they brought with them. The teacher gives the descriptions. There will be a craft show after recess where children can show what they made the previous Friday. Eric has brought a thin cross-section of a tree branch. The teacher says that she is very pleased because the principal is bringing a new magnifying glass the next day and this could be the first thing that they would look at with it. The teacher starts to explain about the rings showing the age of the tree. The child has that knowledge and breaks in to explain. "Eric, you've been a big help for me today." There are many instances when the teacher recognizes individual contributions in such a way that the children feel that their efforts and ideas are appreciated and needed.

The teacher takes attendance by asking questions in French and having the children respond and ask questions of her:

Bonjour!

Comment ca va?

Ca va bien merci.

For "homework" they have a bean seed to plant. While taking attendance the teacher speaks to each one about something personal or individual:

> Matthew, is your mom coming home today?
>
> Isabel was sick with chicken pox and flu before that and we are sure glad to have her back.

Mrs. Kruger assigns a child to be the "helping hand." "Who are our helpers today?" Later, the children together recite the days of the week in English and then in French. When putting numbers on the calendar, consideration is given to the writing of these numbers. The teacher holds up the number and cites a rhyme so chilren will remember how to write the numeral. For example:

> 1 - Making a single stroke down, she exclaims, "One is fun."
>
> 3 - Around a tree; around a tree.
>
> 5 - Down the street, around the corner; oops I forgot my hat.

Patrick recites the rhyme right away and the teacher remarks, "Patrick you are really on these numbers."

The teacher states, "This is a new poem this week" as she points to the pocket chart. Samuel reads March before the teacher does. She exclaims, "You're really reading it!" The class repeats the poem together as Mrs. Kruger points along the lines of the poem that are written on cards in the pocket chart.

The teacher reminds the class of the felt board pieces of the story, The Billy Goats Gruff. A lot of use is made of these during Centre Time. The teacher shows "homework." She has a basket labelled on the outside with a removable laminated "k" word card. Children are to bring from home something that starts with the letter "k." One boy has traced a kangaroo and drawn a key. Samuel has written the words "knocks" and "knee." Karlie has placed the laminated word "Karlie" into the basket.

The teacher reads a story while the children listen. They orally fill in repeated words whenever the teacher pauses. Later, the children complete an individual calendar activity where they have to fill in the dates. Gym time follows.

At Centre Time children are free to choose an activity of interest. After recess there is a craft show. One girl makes something with Styrofoam pieces and pipe cleaner. The teacher remarks, "Hold this and tell us what you used to make this." She repeats the words spoken by every child. Each of the children makes something different. Some of the things used in the craft projects include: stickers, sparkles, Styrofoam pieces, chalk, crayon and egg carton pieces.

At snack the children identify foods according to food groups. Isabel's mother and younger brother come in. The teacher speaks to him, "Hurry Bradley. You can join us for snack." She calls upon the helpers for the day to give out snack.

The teacher reads from the Sesame Street Story Book. The children then sing a song while following along in a "big book." Matthew follows closely the sequence in the song and offers "HORSE!" when appropriate. "Good thinking, Matthew." During the group singing, Samuel constructs an object with puzzle pieces until it collapses. He puts it away.

At 11:20 the children prepare to go home. The teacher speaks to each child as he or she leaves. "Matthew, did you get your mail? What's your "k" word?"

Some parents meet children at the door. The teacher urges Billy's mother to "Come in." The teacher speaks with the mother of the girl who is using the crutch and reassuringly states, "It was a good day." The teacher previously told me that last Friday had been a day of many tears because her leg was often bumped.

Mrs. Kruger gives George's mother a sharp letter opener that George had brought to school and that the teacher had confiscated. She comments that it is not a good thing for him to bring to school.

Teacher's Perspective

Mrs. Kruger has taught Grade One for two and a half years and Kindergarten for two years. She explains her position concerning curriculum objectives:

> In Kindergarten, in this city, we base our program on the SPICE checklist. So I think that we're tying to develop from where that child comes into the Kindergarten: socially physically, intellectually, culturally and emotionally. A well-rounded development and for the children to develop at their own pace. (April.85.TI.E.A)

Mrs. Kruger attempts to "give them a feeling of joy in learning; a love of coming to school. . . .I really want them to feel so confident in themselves, and so confident that they can handle schoolwork, and so enjoying learning in this kind of environment that they will carry on through the years with a really good feeling about themselves." She believes that "Kindergarten approximates as closely as possible how children learn in their early years."

Louise Kruger sends home a lot of information about the Kindergarten program. The teacher continuously and convincingly encourages parents to come into the classroom any time for whatever length of time is convenient. Her arrangement of a "Father's night" is an example of how she accomplishes her objective to have the whole family informed about the activities of the child. She feels that in Kindergarten many parents are available, enthusiastic and comfortable in the classroom. She feels this attitude from the parents lessens in Grade One but she is not certain why. As a parent she has been able to participate in the Grade One class that her son attends on a regular basis without any problem. All parents in the study whose children are involved in this program, express the feeling that her newsletters are very thorough and valuable in terms of ensuring communication. Mrs. Kruger feels parents should not be involved in programming decisions and should not discipline children in the program environment. Mrs. Kruger feels it is when one becomes a parent of a Kindergarten student that parents really enter a "system." This participation by child and parent in the school system has a major impact on the description of parent involvement. She sees it as a scary first experience for both parents and child. She sees Kindergarten as a "bridge" between home and school.

Matthew

Matthew's mother feels that because the number of mornings a week Matthew attends school has increased from two to five this year, that "He's not as restless as he was last year." She explains:

> He's matured to the point where he is able to play on his own. . . . .He plays some pretty sophisticated games with his dad. (April.85.PI.E)

His teacher comments:

> It depends on where the friends of the morning are going [where he will choose to play]. Matthew really enjoys block centre. He enjoys house centre, dramatic play; not with dressing up and being father, mother, family; more Darth Vader, Luke Skywalker type with the idea of the guns and blasters. [He enjoys] sand and water. (April.85.TI.E)

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Kindergarten Year

Matthew is physically small in comparison to the rest of the members of this family. This surfaces as a factor in their decision making about schooling. They are also concerned about his maturity. "We consider Matthew to be on the young end of the scale as far as for school . . . [He is] three or four months behind the cut-off." This year they illuminate their perceptions of the "problem:"

> I think because of Matthew's size--not really meaning to, but really comparing him even to our older boys, and thinking you're really not tough enough in a way. [Not] big enough which is ludicrous. But I think without meaning to, we do that. (April.85.PI.E)
>
> In the last year . . . he's gone from about the 20th percentile to the 50th percentile in both height and weight . . . Over the last two years he's come from the 10th percentile in both height and weight. (April.85.PI.E)

These comments indicate that the "problem" has been monitored, indicating it is likely a substantial factor in parental considerations regarding Matthew.

Ruth shares a thought on family dynamics. "Sometimes we'll sit at the dinner table and the dynamics are such that he's really trying to keep up with the conversation." Ruth sees the family dynamics contributing to his occasional stuttering. His Kindergarten teacher, Louise Kruger, remarks that "He never stutters at school." Ruth comments, "Louise said to me 'Your life is really crazy right now. When he talks to you, give him your undivided attention and make sure you get down to his level.'" This seems to indicate a great deal of knowledge on the part of the teacher about the Emmerson's home situation. The teacher also seems aware of the contrast in Matthew's size compared with others in the family. With Allan, Matthew is "kind of a force to be reckoned with and he's threatening him." Ruth continues;

> We find the dynamics in our family have changed now that he (Matthew) is older. He's realized that he knows some things and he's thrusting them forward and they're (brothers) questioning him. And before, he was our baby. (April.85.PI.E)

Ruth and Bob Emmerson observe that Matthew "tends to be quite impatient with his own productivity." Perhaps this is a reflection of parents unconsciously focusing on the product. They also observe that he is putting himself down. "He'll say, 'Matthew you stupid. Matthew, why'd you do that, you dummy?' And I don't remember either of our other children doing that." The comparison to the older siblings is very much a part of a perspective that affects their decisions and ultimately their involvement with Matthew: interaction and provision of environments for development. Ruth Emmerson believes that being the youngest is a significant factor in personality development. She comments:

> When you are the youngest person in a family, and you're a fair amount younger

> than the next child, you have a tendency to expect yourself to achieve at the level of that child. (April.85.PI.E)

> [He is] very much a product of being the youngest. Especially where there are three boys. He's exposed to more sophisticated toys and is more influenced. (April.85.PI.E)

Rather than "more influenced," perhaps he is influenced in a particular way. His actions seem to be a clear picture of his assimilation of and accommodation to the environment he encounters (Piaget, 1965). Ruth Emmerson speaks about the Kindergarten program:

> The amazing thing about the program and the way that she's instituted it, is that I think it can benefit the children even coming from different backgrounds and from different spaces that they are in. She loves them and accepts them for what they are but they know what her guidelines are. (April.85.PI.E)

Ruth feels somewhat let down because the type of involvement she will be able to have in Matthew's schooling will be different. Matthew is her youngest child and will be moving into school programs where he will be expected to handle the experiences more independently than he did in Preschool and Kindergarten. She remarks:

> I almost feel like "Oh, his Kindergarten year's almost over. . . .Involvement changes . . . just the freedom to be really involved in what they're doing in the classroom and, also, in just a general sense with LAC changes even from Kindergarten to Grade One. I know that. It's not been a frantic thing, but it's been more nostalgic realizing. (April.85.PI.E)

The teacher allows for differences in the children's perspectives on the schooling experience itself. She appreciates and seems to share with the Emmerson's some consideration for Matthew's individuality.

The Emmerson's devote considerable energy and time to their children's individual needs. It is a reflection of "the times"--a cultural attitude toward family planning in a population (society) where many people have a choice about family size. These parents make the assumption that family planning is better because the time needed to help individuals with their development is considerable.

The Emmerson's have a history of being "shoppers" for good schooling. They have strong convictions about being advocates for their children and wanting to know teachers well.

> With our oldest now in Grade Five, we've gone through a lot of different experiences with teachers. So both of us feel very glad and grateful that Matthew is having this experience with her. (April.85.PI.E)

Ruth Emmerson likes to get to know the teacher well as a friend. It is possible with this teacher. Perhaps Ruth's need to know in order to be her child's advocate is not easily regulated by herself in terms of the degree of objectivity and subjectivity (Katz, 1986). She claims she wants to get "to know the teacher just as well as I possibly can--in a professional way, but in an interpersonal way too. . . .That gives them the opportunity to tell me, 'You're not being realistic.' Because sometimes we're not."

Louise Kruger seems professional and in charge of the situation in this respect. For example, when asked how she feels Matthew would be with Mrs. Elliot as a teacher in Grade One, she relates Mrs. Elliot's strengths. Mrs. Kruger supports Matthew's mother when she is concerned about his stuttering by giving "objective" advice. The teacher speaks of "loving" the children, but maintains distance. This is of paramount importance because of Ruth Emmerson's potential lack of objectivity. Mrs. Emmerson states that she, herself, may be too involved. She seems to be speaking about emotional involvement here. Ruth Emmerson uses opportunities provided to support herself in her parenting development and in carrying out what she perceives to be her parenting role and responsibilities.

This teacher's structure of parent involvement supports a broad concept of parent involvement. She seems to be speaking as much from her perspective as a parent as from that of a professional educator when she expresses the feeling that "it's very hard to let your child go into the school structure." She relates:

> I see parent involvement being really necessary--really, really necessary at the Kindergarten level. And that's not to say it isn't later on, but I'm dealing at Kindergarten. (April.85.PI.E)

This is also Ruth's perception based on extensive interactions and accommodations. Ruth and Bob feel compelled to be well informed when dealing with the school system as the older boys experienced it. In some cases the older boys cope with what the parents perceive to be less than adequate environments for positive growth experiences. This teacher's actions demonstrate an attitude that parents are indeed the clients, and a variety of parent involvement requirements will be met by her planned "openness."

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

The family has now resided in their home for more than a year. Because they are more settled the mother feels Matthew is experiencing something the other boys did not. She feels she can see in him the benefits of this security. In the Kindergarten program, Ruth is directly involved in the classroom. Relative to school contacts, and within her perceived role, Ruth is responsible as spokesperson; keeping track of what is going on and picking up on "vibes" so as to understand and orchestrate school experiences. She has a nostalgic feeling as she realizes that Kindergarten is ending. She knows then that involvement changes. Parent involvement is being the field trip coordinator. It is getting to know the teacher in a professional way but, also, in an interpersonal way. Communication is important. Parent involvement is looking ahead to the program offered in Grade One and accepting assurance from the present, well-respected teacher that what is offered by the teacher at this school is very much the kind of environment that would be best for Matthew. Parent involvement is having varied experiences with teachers and schools--some perceived as healthful for the child and some quite the opposite. It is the Emmerson's still not knowing how they can ensure that it would be any other way. Parent involvement is supporting the Reading program offered at school by listening to advice from the teacher about activities to supplement Matthew's development. It is intending to carry out teacher suggestions during the summer. Group dynamics must be monitored and helped along constructively. Family involvement always has a high priority; the children are actively involved with one another a lot of the time. Parent involvement is realizing the needs of the youngest child who is perceived as being very small relative to other family members.

The Emmerson Family - Grade One Year

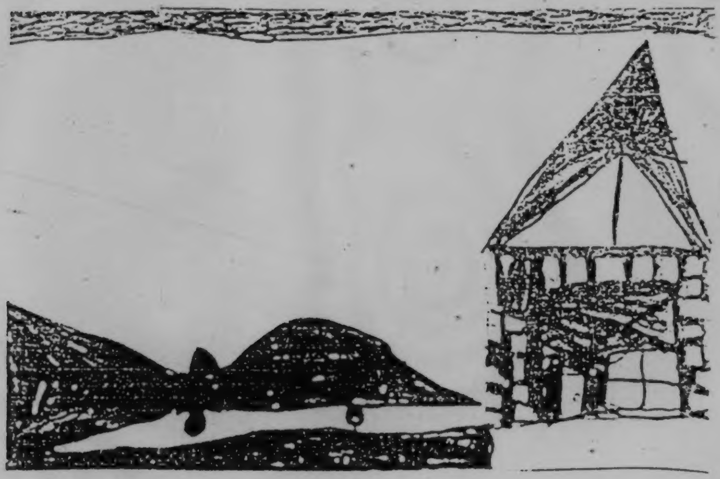
Matthew contributes the following information providing insight into his learning environments.

Matthew's Book

> I like to play with my friends: Billy, Paul, Regan, Ian . . . Dianna.
>
> My favourite thing to do is beat up my dad. I play games with my dad: cards, chess. He always beats me in chess because I don't know it very well.

My mom chases me around. She gets mad at me because I bug my brothers and then they tell. I run away and she chases me.

My mom knows what I do at school because she teaches. I tell her sometimes what I do in my classroom.



This is my grandma's and grandpa's house (see illustration above). This is the street and that's my car. I was going to make them waiting outside but I'm not going to. My dad always drives the car. It takes me seven days.

My mom came in [the classroom in] Kindergarten, but she doesn't now. (March.84)

Entering Matthew's Learning Environment

Father's Description

Recently we mounted a basketball hoop on the garage roof. While the hoop isn't regulation height, it is over eight feet high. Consequently, Matthew wasn't initially interested in playing with his brothers and me because he simply didn't think he could throw a ball that high and make it go through a hoop. A day or so ago I noticed Matthew outside dribbling the basketball. I went out and joined him. He seemed happy to have someone with whom to play and asked if I wanted to play a game of basketball. We agreed on some modified rules: no rebounds; alternating shots with only one shot at a time; dad could only take shots ten feet or farther from the basket. I could tell that he had been working on his dribbling because of the pride he took in bouncing the ball around. Between shots, he would spend a lot of time dribbling and checking to see that I was aware of how well he could dribble. After we both missed several shots, he made one which tickled us both. He was very excited about his accomplishment and I congratulated him on a good shot. He shot several times again before making another basket, but I could tell by the look in his eyes that he was determined to make more baskets. He expressed a real sense of accomplishment; almost, at first, a sense of disbelief that he could make a basket. As we played more, he was so pleased that he started to dribble the ball under one of his legs. It was a funny sight. He'd kick his leg high into the air and try quickly to bounce the ball under it. (March.86.Q.E)

Mother's Description

The activity involved was the creation of finger puppets. This was by Matthew's choice and instigation and was conducted at our kitchen table. Matthew chose to create three puppets for his play: a devil, a knight and a horse. He worked happily, carefully drawing in pencil and then colouring with markers, the three characters. We discussed the various techniques he was using (i.e., details, appropriate colours, etc.) and how successful he was becoming as an artist! My only physical involvement was the measuring of fingers and taping of puppets. He worked steadily for over thirty minutes and then begged an old shoe box from me which he cut and designed into a castle puppet theatre. Wow! I hope he'll share the story with me soon! Matthew was so obviously pleased with himself and his creations! I was thrilled to see him enjoying his own creative

> thinking and the transferral into concrete objects. Self-confidence and joy in this part of himself has come slowly for Matthew as he has two older brothers who are good artists and he never felt that his drawings measured up! This attitude has obviously changed and I'm so pleased for him! (March.86.Q.E)

Redwood School Grade One Program

The regular teacher has just returned from a prolonged illness and second long-term absence. It is possible that both the classroom environment and communication with parents are significantly different from what it would normally be had the teacher been with the children throughout the entire year.

The bell rings and Samuel moves directly to his desk. Mrs. Elliot, the teacher, is standing next to Dianna's desk. She talks with Dianna and then comments to the class, "Dianna is going to tell us something as soon as we all get together. We will wait a minute for Louise. Her mother might be bringing her." Louise comes through the door and the teacher remarks, "Oh good. I thought you'd come." Matthew is colouring.

Dianna tells about having a babysitter on Friday and Saturday, getting sick to her stomach and then her mother coming home. She remarks, "I'm feeling much better." The teacher comments, "We missed you." Matthew eats some cheese twists from his desk.

Mrs. Elliot talks about the computer coming into the classroom. She states, "Partners will have a turn working through what is right for you, children." Children are talking about spring holiday plans and summer. The teacher directs their attention to new vocabulary words on the blackboard which they proceed to read with the teacher. The teacher hands out books. When she goes past Matthew she remarks, "That's beautiful," in reference to a coloured picture on his desk.

The 26 students are divided into two reading groups. Half of one group meets at a round table at the back to take turns reading a story out loud from the reader. The four children from the study are in "Group Two". These children are reading at their desks. The teacher instructs the other members of Group One: "The rest of you come and sit up on the mat." They read words on the flip chart. Several of the children read out loud to themselves. The children using the flip chart read the words very loudly.

Dianna slides down in her desk. She is back up. She moves her hand along as she reads. She continues without her hand following.

At 9:05 Matthew remarks, "I'm finished. I'll read it again. No, I already read it." Then he starts to read again.

Samuel goes back and forth from his desk to the garbage can two or three times with scraps of paper.

Samuel, whose seat is at the front of the row, argues with Matthew at the back about who was the first one finished. Matthew throws an eraser bouncing it on the floor.

Samuel has trouble coming up with an answer for one of the "comprehension" questions when it is necessary for him to look at the illustration to come up with the "correct" answer (and he is not directed to do so). Samuel is the first one finished.

The teacher tells the children "I have an Easter story on the tape with a story. When you're done, you can come on the mat to hear it." She puts it on and children arrive at different times to hear it in progress. Mrs. Elliot puts on a record of Peter Cottontail. All the childen get to listen to this whether they are finished work or not.

The teacher goes over the comprehension questions with children who are at their desks. She asks the questions to the group but no one offers answers.

The teacher speaks to the children sitting on the mat at the front of the room, "Are you people listening or are you visiting? Get over there," she suggests to a child who is trying to be closest to the tape recorder.

Reading Time continues until it is time to go to the gym. The Grade One and Two classes are combined for Physical Education. This is followed by a time for Math.

The teacher tells the children to put everything away. "I'm going to bring a mat for you. I'll give you Plasticine. We're going to do fractions with it."

Samuel and Robbie are making the workbooks neat at the side of the classroom. When they are given permission each child, in turn, gets Plasticine and a popsicle stick for cutting from the back of the room.

The teacher repeats, "We're going to make fractions in a minute." Samuel pulls out a dinosaur from his container. It is a creation made at an earlier time. The teacher states, "You're not going to play and have fun here, you're going to do as you're told."

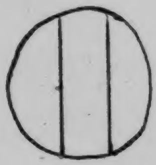
The teacher instructs, "Make a ball. Make this fraction with your ball: one half. Squish it flat so you have a cookie. Poke a middle hole and then make a "Y" and make this fraction with your ball: one third." Once all the children have done these two things she instructs, "Make a donut. We're going to share our donut four ways, so we make four quarters. They must be the same size. Matthew asks, "Is this fine or not? Mine are all even." His question goes unanswered. The teacher states, "We're going to shape an Easter egg. Many of the children exclaim, "OOOOhhhh . . ." Matthew replies, "Easy." He seems to want to ensure that others know he can do as well here as anyone. He goes on to remark, "Ah, this is easy." Robbie states, "Mine are really even." He is making many jellybean-sized "eggs." Matthew calls out quite loudly, "So are mine." This loudness seems to be an effort to assert himself and convey the idea that he is just as "good" at this activity as anyone. He continues, "I have mine done."

The teacher gives this problem: "We have six jellybean eggs. Three children must get them. Do the problem on your desks." The children are very attentive when they are working with hands as compared with their work with paper and pencil, and "right" answers. Samuel extends the activity and makes nine eggs. He divides them so that each of three people will get three. The teacher explains, "Each group is one third of them."

Mrs. Elliot gives this problem: "Ten eggs and four children. We must share." Using a drawing on the blackboard she shows how this can be done. She then instructs them to fix their own.

In another example the teacher explains, "Make a big pie. Company came to your house. There were six of you: one sixth."

One child's attempt:



Mrs. Elliot asks Samuel, "Is that okay?" Samuel responds, "No." She gives it to Samuel to work on.

Some of the children turn their desks to face the blackboard on which the teacher puts the illustrations. Samuel is watching Robbie draw on the blackboard. Matthew meticulously makes many small eggs and wants to keep them. The teacher is working with one student. In the meantime many of the students turn their desks. The teacher remarks, "That was silly. Turn them back." The change occurs quite naturally and does not appear to be a threat.

The teacher tells the children to put away the clay in the can. Matthew asks, "Can't we play with it?" The teacher replies, "No, we are going to do more Math. Girls put the clay away." Samuel grabs some mats out of Chris' hands. The teacher comments to Chris, "You're not supposed to be doing that. Go to your desk."

Dianna is in her desk. Isabel is in her desk looking for "work" to do. Samuel knows what he is supposed to be doing and is convincing some others that what he knows is "right." It is a mimeographed sheet of "plusses." Samuel whizzes through the problems. Dianna does one question but is interested in what is happening with the truck outside.

Matthew uses fingers for calculations. Matthew, Dianna and Isabel work diligently. Samuel is finished and is tracing an Easter egg at the back table. Catherine joins Samuel. Matthew states, "I already did an egg kind of like that, but not quite the same." Samuel has a chance to put some creative thought into this project. The teacher urges, "Children you have to be quiet. Children are still working. It's not visiting time."

Samuel and Robbie talk about Lego World. The teacher encourages, "Robbie you make nice designs. The hard workers are the ones having a little bit of fun [with designs on construction paper eggs]." Tod muses, "I'm a fast worker." Isabel retorts, "You're not supposed to be talking." Crayons, felt pens, and pencils are available for designing here. Dianna does workbook work longer than some others because she has some to complete from the previous day when she was absent.

Matthew's mother steps inside the door. The children prepare to leave without a formal dismissal this day. Ruth, Matthew's mother is here to get Dianna and Matthew. Ruth does not seem particulary comfortable in the room and seems anxious to leave.

From the classroom observation it seems that an inordinate amount of the teacher's time and energy is necessarily directed toward classroom management. One of the reasons Irene Adams volunteers to assist is because she feels the "extra hands" would allow Mrs. Elliot to be more effective in her teaching.

Teacher's Perspective

Mrs. Elliot first began teaching in a classroom that had children in Grades One through Eight. Louise Kruger (the Kindergarten teacher) had described Mrs. Elliot to Matthew's mother by stating: "There's not a trick she's not seen." Matthew's mother states that Louise "thinks the world" of Gwen Elliot. She believes she "knows kids" because she has taught for some twenty odd years.

Mrs. Elliot believes that it is because she has always been successful in teaching children to read, that she progressed toward younger students.

> I've always been very interested in reading and have been successful teaching children to read. . . .Grade One is my preferred grade. They are . . . the ones that are the most work. . . .I enjoy them because you have immediate results and they're so very open and spontaneous. . . .They enjoy their successes and you can enjoy them with them. (March.86.TI.E.A)

Mrs. Elliot's objective in program planning is to "go from the social, emotional objectives towards the academic objectives."

> I plan activities that allow each child to have some successes each day. We started in with the concrete things that every child can handle and do and gradually proceed to more abstract work. From real objects and things to pictures and then learning printed words. So we go in the direction that the child develops. (March.86.TI.E.A)

She feels this describes social "preparation" which she feels is "most important." Mrs. Elliot continues:

> The child [needs to] be able to follow directions, to take instruction from other adults, behave, have fairly good manners, understand right from wrong as far as being honest and telling the truth. The child has learned to share and take turns. (March.86.TI.E.A)

Mrs. Elliot feels that social preparation must begin at home. She hopes that parents take time to appreciate what the children have produced. She claims that communication is important and that it helps if parents and teacher are able to talk informally. However, the parents in the study indicate that interactions with the teacher do not provide them with as much information as they would like to have. One parent suggests that Mrs. Elliot picks what she will discuss. The teacher may feel that her professional position or her traditional role as teacher would be placed in jeopardy by letting the parents gain too much influence and/or control. She does not think parents should be in the room when the children are working because it is disruptive for the children. (The researcher feels uncomfortable observing in the classroom. Mrs. Elliot appears to have reservations about the researcher's presence.) She feels it is helpful to know about the environments the childen experience outside of school but nothing is proposed to demonstrate how she will become knowledgeable. Parents can come for special presentations. She feels it is the way parents spend time with their children that is important and not necessarily how much time they have to be with them. She points out that all of the mothers "are at home;" they don't work outside the home.

Matthew

Matthew has taken skating and swimming lessons this year. He joined Pathfinders (beginner group of Junior Forest Wardens) and his mother feels he has learned a lot through this program.

Ruth explains how his reading ability has developed:

> He showed real discipline in his efforts to learn how to read once he realized that he really could read! The position now is that he's gone through all his readers and he's gotten bored with them. Although he's really doing so much better and starting to sound out words, he still is not really over the hump yet. Like he can't quite handle the "easy-readers" from the public library. (March.86.PI.E)

His mother's descriptions indicate that he is being more forceful in establishing his presence ~~in the family~~. Matthew's health and position in the family are discussed in the context of Parents' Perceptions that follow.

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Grade One Year

Part way through the Grade One year, Ruth Emmerson accepts a part-time paid position at Redwood School. She is not involved with the Grade One class.

Matthew's teacher speaks of his not being very well for a few years when he was very young. Because of this she feels that he has more "mother attention" than some.

Bob Emmerson does not mention this and Ruth talks only about his ears becoming infected when he took swimming when very young. Gwen Elliot (Grade One teacher) considers him "a much more restless child." She indicates that "He's allergic to things." His parents never mention this! The teacher remarks:

> He needs more parental supervision. But he's well enough trained so that he is able to tell me if there is something he can't eat. So I don't have to watch that as much as for a child who, perhaps, hasn't got that control. (March.86.TI.E)

It seems that the teacher is focusing on "training." She talks about him looking after his own physical needs. On the other hand, parents focus on "family dynamics," affective well-being, and degree of apparent caring behaviour. Descriptions of Matthew from these different perspectives create descriptions that vary greatly in substance (content). For example his mother says:

> Matthew gets along well with his dad . . . interacts with mom more seriously. He's into questioning mom's requests of him. He pushes to see who'll give in first. Interesting, but frustrating for both parties. . . .Lorne loves to tease [and] so does Matthew, but he can't quite keep up, so often gets frustrated with their exchanges. (March.86.Q.E)

Matthew's teacher, like the parents and the teachers before, considers his family position (youngest) as an important factor in his development. However, unlike the parents, Mrs. Elliot considers this to be advantageous for Matthew. She states:

> He's had two older brothers as role models and learns from them. It's easier for him than for a first child. (March.86.TI.E)

Parents speak about his difficulties as the "third" child.

> M: He gets pretty silly around here and he gets pretty clownish because he's our youngest. That's pretty typical of your youngest. If you're trying to get a word in edgewise, then you get silly and then you get attention. So we've been kind of working to try to get him not to be that way. "Matthew you don't have to talk so loudly, we hear you."
>
> F: We also discovered in the fall that he was starting to stutter a bit. He was not only talking loudly but stuttering.
>
> M: His perception [after reading groups were determined by the second long-term sub] of [his ability to read] was not good. "Mom, this is too hard. I can't do this." And tears. (March.86.PI.E)

Bob's dialogue with Matthew following his cross-country skiing seems to indicate Matthew's apprehension about being a leader in the family:

> M: [In Pathfinders] they cross-country skied. A totally new experience [for Matthew.]
>
> F: Something the family doesn't do.
>
> M: Something that we hope to do, but that we haven't really taken on yet. It's interesting that he should be the first one to do it because he was the one we were waiting to get to a certain maturity before we took it on because he's physically so much smaller than the rest of us.

> F: I asked him if he'd now teach us [to cross-country ski]. And he said "Well I fell a couple of times." (March.86.PI.E)

It seems that the teacher and parents see Matthew quite differently. Group management seems to be an a priori aspect of the teacher's perspective. It is a major concern or focus that is apparent to the researcher from her classroom observation.

For the Emmerson's the principal concern of Grade One is reading. Bob Emmerson shares Matthew's concern:

> F: I remember that Matthew on the third day of school in September, I asked him how his day went at school and he said, "Well, I still can't read."
>
> M: That was his expectation.
>
> F: So when Christmas rolled around and he still wasn't [reading] I think he did feel defeated by the whole thing. (March.86.PI.E)

The conception of reading here seems confined to sound-symbol relationships. The parents do not seem to recognize, for example, the importance of the child's wealth of background knowledge as a part of what reading is. Their conception focuses on "skills" to form the "product"--the sounds to go with the words on the page. This is clearly evident in Ruth's remarks:

> (Mid-January) Matthew was not really reading. He had a lot of word lists and he could pick out some words on some sheets and what not but he was not reading. He was basically following the reading program that our other two boys had used. Basically the whole word approach. . . .He had conquered

> several of the readers, but he could not put anything in context. He had actually lost [ground]!
>
> It's okay not to know. I've always told my kids that. Matthew was the only one who couldn't read in our family because he's our youngest. We weren't putting the pressure on him. But he felt pressure. He did! There were two reading groups established because that's the easiest way once the teacher assesses where the children are at. That really seems to be the best way for them to really get the ball rolling. Whether we like it or not the children know [that the better readers are in one group]. (March.86.PI.E)

Matthew's mother feels frustrated with what she perceives as Matthew's loss in reading skills since the end of Kindergarten. At one point she states it is her fault because she is not doing things necessary to maintain his knowledge in phonics. Ruth feels Matthew was losing confidence in his ability to learn to read:

> M: We've tried to provide [help with his reading] without putting too much stress on him. I try to read with him twice a day. I try to read with him ten minutes in the morning when he's good and fresh and that's our really positive time. I try to do phonetics or reading or some type of a game with him just to reinforce that in the evening.
>
> F: Ruth's worked well with his phonetics and I'll sit down with him as well during the week. He's working on sounds now too.
>
> M: I went in and shared with her [sub] my concerns and I told Matthew I had. It was really positive for him. I think it was a little scary for him too. He said, "You went in and talked to my teacher about this? And I said, "Yes, because Mrs. Gagnon and I want you to learn to read and we don't want you being upset and saying you can't do it."

> Because as soon as a person says they can't, you're half defeated. He was quite discouraged. That actually propelled me in there even faster. I think in some ways, my reaction was so crucial in that period of time. (March.86.PI.E)

Ruth describes a "defeated" feeling she and Matthew had about Matthew not yet being able to read. She felt a need to take action because she believed he was developing a negative attitude about himself as a learner. There were problems with her working with him. She explains:

> He was feeling it and I was feeling it. He knew and that was one of the problems with me being the one working with him. Because he knew. During that period of time when [the second sub] was here, she was just so receptive to him and she appreciated me sharing with her how concerned he was. She really honestly cared. She offered me so many good suggestions that had I been a more experienced teacher, I would have known. It made me feel bad. Maybe because I was so worried because he was my child that I was really ineffective. Like if she hadn't been so good, I don't know what I would have done. We were really very worried about him. (March.86.PI.E)

Parents do not participate as helpers in the Grade One classroom. Matthew Emmerson comments:

> My mom came in[to the] Kindergarten [class], but she doesn't now.
>
> My mom knows what I do at school because she teaches. I tell her sometimes what I do in my classroom. (March.86.CI.E)

The teacher believes there should be open dialogue but it does not seem to happen. She remarks:

> It always helps if the parents and the teacher are really able to talk with one another quite informally, at informal times.

> I think if you only talk once or twice a year, you wouldn't have a very good idea what your child's teacher is like, or [for] the teacher, what the parents are like. I think the informal part is quite important. (March.86.TI.E.A)

However, it appears from Mrs. Emmerson's remarks that there is insufficient informal communication. Ruth elaborates:

> The thing about the classroom situation that is a little frightening is not knowing. Feeling like this woman isn't even going to tell me what's going on. I think she tells me more than she tells the other parents because now I'm teaching there. It's unfortunate but it's kind of like my status has changed and so Mrs. Elliot I think is a little more open with me than she's been with some of the other parents. (March.86.PI.E)

Mrs. Elliot may feel comfortable enough to permit better communication to develop in this situation. She may feel they share sufficient knowledge of the school situation and have similar enough perspectives to allow for more open sharing. However, Mrs. Emmerson is not yet satisfied. She believes that "Mrs. Elliot is very willing to share with me one on one [but] she picks what she will share" (March.86.PI.E).

Mrs. Emmerson discusses her need for relevant, firsthand information concerning Matthew in the classroom setting. She expresses her feeling of disappointment about the "closed-door" policy.

> I've had parents say to me, and quietly I agree with them, that you walk into the school and basically you feel like this school has an open-door policy, but the Grade One door is closed.

> I don't feel I should have to approach her and say, "How is Matthew doing?" and feel timid and hesitant. That's what I think makes me uneasy. What you end up having to do is trust someone else's judgement almost totally.
>
> If I feel I'm not welcome in the classroom, I feel like questioning why? There's got to be a reason. And that's maybe really suspicious, but that's just my gut feeling.
>
> Parents who have justifiable concerns, should be able to come in. Even if it takes them coming in and observing. Even if that's what they need for reassurance, then I guess I'm saying you should provide that. But then to me it's not threatening. (March.86.PI.E)

From parent comments it seems that some of the following teacher suggestions about ways a parent should be involved are, in fact, available to parents::

> [They can] appreciate what the little child brings home, . . . read the newsletter, . . . [and] come for interviews. . . .If the class hangs artwork out in the hallway [or] . . . print stories and hang them out, many of our parents are around school a lot . . . [and] they see what we're studying at this time. . . .The parents come to the concerts. (March.86.TI.E.A)

Mrs. Elliot goes on to suggest forms of parent involvement that the Emmerson's and Adams' indicate are not experienced in a meaningful way with this teacher. She remarks, "Wherever I see a weakness we discuss it together . . . so that home and school are united in helping the child. The child feels that we are all working together to help him to get better." The teacher is decided on the following action:

> I don't particularly want them (parents) in class when I'm teaching; . . . sitting here. There's not much point in that. (March.86.TI.E.A)

Teacher talk about "help together," "united in helping" and "working together" appears not to imply parent input of insights or suggestions. Instead, it seems to support the teacher's predetermined goals: manifestations of success in demonstrated child-acquired skills. This teacher appears to be product oriented. She seems teacher-centred even with respect to what she considers parents should do as their involvement.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

Parent involvement requires that the parent trust the judgement of the teacher. For the established teacher, Mrs. Emmerson, this is the first time there is no direct classroom involvement of parents when the children are active in the program. There is apprehension and wondering on the part of the parents (particularly the mother because it is her role to know about school learning in order to be an advocate for the child). Parent involvement includes communication with other parents who are feeling uneasy about being "shut out" of the classroom. It is diplomacy. When a long-term substitute is with the children for some time and little progress is perceived to have been made in the child's school learning, the parent begins to lose a trust in the system and feels strongly that action must be taken. Parent involvement is awareness of what the experience is like for the child. Trust in the teacher's "track record" is required, but proves to be less than adequate because the parents feel their child loses ground in terms of his reading ability while under the guidance of the first long-term substitute teacher. Parents become involved when they communicate concerns to the principal. Communication with three different teachers during the school term varies greatly as to its perceived quality. The parents feel they are ultimately responsible for the child's education and are very concerned. Parent involvement is finding other programs for one's child. It is orchestrating healthy emotional development by mediating reactions of siblings and the other parent. It is hoping to do certain things as a family; having intentions whether they come to fruition or not. It is sharing the learning, teaching and guiding between mother and father and, also, amongst other family members. It is family involvement and knowing the child is exposed to adult teachers who value quality interaction with children in the same way parents do.

The Adams Family - Preschool Year

Dianna

Dianna has one sister, Rita, who is two years younger than she is. Irene describes Dianna's relationship with Rita:

> They dress up together a lot. . . .They draw together and paint. Play, play dough. Puzzles. They do all those kinds of things. If one is doing it, the other one is doing it too. They tend to want to be together. They dance together and they do gymnastics--their own gymnastics. (May.84.PI.A)

Her father describes her as "very academic."

> She likes to write and she likes to learn to read already and she's not going to school yet. I think she'll do well if she's given encouragement. (May.84.PI.A)

Her mother speaks of Dianna's determination:

> She loves to help me sew. Either hand sewing or on the machine. She likes to be there. Right in there. If I'm sewing at the machine, she wants to be on my knee and pressing all the buttons to make everything work. . . .She likes to make things. Lacing cards and things like that. She wants me to show her how to do it. She's away as soon as she's seen it once. Then she's fine. She likes to do it herself. (May.84.PI.A)

Irene and Hugh Adams

The Adams' are recent immigrants from England. Irene is an only child. There are no other members of their extended family living in Canada. One probable reason for volunteering to be a part of this study is because they were apprehensive about the decisions they were making about Dianna's schooling. This intensifies because they have no experience with the North American School system as children. Irene feels comfortable with not working outside the home. She takes advantage of opportunities where she puts herself into a group of people with whom she can share and learn and then decide in consultation with Hugh what is best for Dianna's development. Attitudes toward obedience, manners, respect for elders, and taking on responsibility for looking after one's belongings and grooming at an early age are strongly influenced by parental upbringing in the British Isles. Dianna will attend Kindergarten and Grade One in the school where the Preschool is housed. Irene experiences a strong support system here. The probability of that continuing looks good.

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Preschool Year

Hugh and Irene Adams demonstrate that they are developing and adjusting their concept of healthy discipline. Irene speaks about the choice of Kindergarten environment and relates that they were looking for strict discipline. When she observed at a school (not Redwood) she witnessed a situation with strict discipline and felt it was not what she wanted for Dianna. They observe Dianna's actions and reactions and interpret her needs on the basis of these observations. They are strongly influenced by feelings for her affective development. They demonstrate somewhat ambivalent feelings, however, because they state that they are looking for a good "academic" school. Their conception of "academic" seems to be undergoing change.

Dianna's mother seems uncomfortable with the fact that Dianna acts the part of the animal when she plays make-believe with friends:

> I used to think that she never communicated with her friends very well because when they came she was always the animal. She never talked she just said, "Meow, meow, meow." (spoken by Irene using different pitches and depicting different moods: angry, gentleness.) I thought what a waste of time inviting anyone around, you know. But now she's back to being Dianna. (May.84.TI.A)

When Dianna is with her father, Irene remarks that Dianna "wants to be doing whatever he's doing. It's not enough to just watch him. She's got to be in there."

Mrs. Oliver notes that Dianna likes to describe things and make up stories. She explains by stating that "When she makes a picture, there's always a story to go with it." The teacher considers her to be mature in many ways such as taking responsibility for her own belongings.

Reading is very important to both parents. At this time, "academic" seems to mean reading and writing. In talking about parent involvement Irene comments, "The hardest things are the frustrating things." She describes an episode in the van when both girls want first to sit in the front seat and, then, in the same back seat.

> It really gets to me and I could just scream. I can just visualize bumping their heads together. I mean I don't do it. But I can feel it. I screw up my hands and wring my hands in absolute frustration . . . By the time I came home I was absolutely fuming. There was steam coming out my

> ears. . . . ."Huremrah!" I just felt that all day had been so good and yet to me it was just spoiled. (May.84.PI.A)

This was after a "good day" when Irene had "given them the whole day. I'd done nothing myself and I didn't care. I had a good time." She expresses her feelings:

Both parents show strong attachment (Katz, 1986). This is apparent in Irene's verbal description:

> It was just terrific to see them (Dianna and Rita) working together . . . I was watching their absorption in what they're creating . . . They're just experimenting with paint to see what it does when you add water or when you splot it here or fold the paper or lean in it or put your hand in it. (with laughter. Father joins in the musing). It's just good to be there and be able to experience it. And I suppose at that moment you realize how lucky you are to be able to be there. And not to have had to send them to a day-care. Or somewhere where you'll miss all that. You'll never get to experience the "Oh, mommy!! Look at this!!!" It's just great to be there. And to watch them run out and swing together or race up and down on their bicycles. Or have an adventure and go around the crescent and come back. Their whole love of life. (May.84.PI.A)

Irene feels Rita and Dianna tend to want to be together:

> They share most things . . . of course they have to have their own time too. I think Dianna finds that most difficult, because . . . she was the only one originally and she was used to having her own time, but Rita's never really had her own time . . . and so . . . she thinks they should be doing things together all the time. (May.84.PI.A)

Schooling in the British Isles influences Hugh Adams' perspective. He comments that they can "research the school and see which schools are turning out good students." The conception/ "good school," seems to be evolving. Irene remarks:

> Hugh and I thought we were looking for a school with good discipline. When I actually went to one with lots of discipline, I didn't like it. It didn't feel like I'd want to go everyday. And that's what we want for Dianna--[to feel that she wants to go everyday]. (May.84.PI.A)

The Adams family lives in an older community. "We are the ones who are always here." Other children come to visit grandparents in the neighbourhood. Irene's parents were not happy when she chose to emigrate. Her parents write twice monthly and phone periodically. They visited once in the past year. The Adams' also made a trip to England. Because of this, parent involvement is a reflection of their independence and is their entire responsibility. The support Irene gets from a Preschool Co-op, car-pooling, babysitting co-op and helper in the classroom perhaps fill more of a need for her in her parenting role than they would for someone with an extended family.

Another parent asks about her choice of Kindergarten for next year and her feeling when she visited. "Was it you that felt good or was it Dianna?" Irene replies:

> I suppose it was [me]--well you can only feel for yourself. I felt that if I had been there, I would have enjoyed it. If I had been involved and if I'm going to be

> working in the classroom then I would enjoy
> it there. (May.84.PI.A)

Dianna's father mentions that they want the school "teaching them to teach themselves . . . and [for children] to think for themselves." But he hesitates, having second thoughts, and adds, "If that's acceptable." He may feel he is expecting more of schooling than he should.

The teacher is obviously pleased by Dianna's level of maturity in her responsibility for her own things and in her speech development because of her parents' "no baby talk approach." The parents are the initial teachers for these things and the school is supporting that.

Irene Adams wants to be a parent helper and enjoys being one. She also feels a need to be involved on the executive. Perhaps this is because she realizes that the sharing amongst parents who are part of this group will help in the development of her parenting knowledge. Support is availiable by friendships and contacts she makes in this way. Mrs. Oliver makes no bones about the fact that she will come to know the child faster, and likely better, if she interacts with the parent more often. She infers that the child will benefit. Irene Adams is doing just as she advocates. Mrs. Oliver wants to influence parents and their parenting. This seems in tune with Irene's felt needs. Their conceptions of learning, "training," teaching and parent involvement seem to be similar. Their views of the child also seem to be well matched.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

In the Preschool year, involvement for Dianna's mother is being the treasurer, being part of a carpool and exchange babysitting, helping on field trips and being the photographer. It is having parent-teacher interviews and participating in workshops. It is being a member of the parent co-op Preschool executive. It is supplementing what is offered at "school." Much of the future involvement in schooling is speculative at this point since Dianna is the eldest child. Parent involvement is acknowledging that schools have resources and trained teachers with "know how" that the parent does not have. Parents must teach the basics of life including family feelings, manners, consideration of others, cleanliness and religion. Feelings, both frustrating and exhilarating, are a part of being involved. Parent involvement means going to a parent orientation meeting for Kindergarten. It is choosing a Kindergarten program. Parent concern that goes with that choice must be handled in such a way as to not place undue pressure on the child or cause the child to worry. Even before the child is a part of the Kindergarten program, the teacher encourages family involvement. Finding the classroom door open and watching Dianna share next year's room with her younger sister, is a part of parent involvement. Involvement includes making sacrifices. It is dealing with sibling rivalry, worry and disappointment. Parent involvement is watching sisters working together and being there to enjoy vicariously their love of life. It is feeling mean if you have to work. It is involving children in what you are doing.

The Adams Family - Kindergarten Year

Entering Dianna's Learning Environment

Father's Description

> Plant Growing from Seeds (School homework project) [It was] very satisfying for me to see her prepare pots with gravel and soil and put seeds in holes. I felt I had to help too, to ensure the seeds would have the best chance to germinate. It's rewarding to see her getting so involved and wanting to do everything, though not knowing how. I am surprised to find she is very diligent and enthusiastic for the project and can't wait for the plants to appear. We make a log of the project. She is very interested and completes approximately six lines of writing (with verbal aid) at one sitting. I'm amazed at her attention span even though she did rest several times. She obviously enjoyed it. (April.85.Q.A)

Mother's Description

The following is Mrs. Adams' description of an experience at home:

> Dianna is very excited to be going out in this wet snow. She is immediately dressed and ready to go and commences to dig in snow. Mixing it with sand, watching the snow melt and form mud obviously has her fascinated. I am thrilled to see her become totally engrossed for a long period of time. The process reminds me so much of my childhood and that pleases me too. Dianna's enthusiasm and delight is very apparent when I join in the fun and we continue with the

> snow play to build a snowman. She is amazed at the texture of the wet snow and its property of sticking together. As we build the snowman higher and higher she gets very excited and although Rita decides to take a rest, then find something else to do, Dianna is determined to see this through to the end. She runs about looking for a pipe and finds a stick which she bends to just the right shape. Then carefully carves a smiling mouth. I am delighted that she is so attentive to detail, and, as we put on the hat and scarf her beaming smile tells all. We all thanked each other for helping build 'Frosty' and the girls sing his song whilst I take their photo. I can honestly say this was an excellent project. (And perhaps makes up for having snow in late April.) (April.85.Q.A)

Redwood School Kindergarten Program

(see Emmerson)

Teacher's Perspective

(see Emmerson)

Dianna

Irene Adams feels that Dianna is "developing a good sense of responsibility for her own things." The Kindergarten teacher, Louise Kruger, describes her as "a really social little child." She continues, "She is fairly strong in small motor skills." Louise feels Dianna also enjoys House Centre, dramatic play including dressing up, and Craft Centre.

During the past year, Dianna took lessons in swimming, gymnastics, skiing and skating. She participated in five family trips: two camping trips (16 days total) and three ski holidays (11 days total).

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Kindergarten Year

Dianna's mother feels pleased to have been reminded of her childhood as she watches Dianna building a snowman at home. Her mother joins in and (see Mother's Description, p. 193). She feels her daughter is "attentive to detail" and "determined to see this through to the end." She states, "I feel good about myself when I've set time aside for doing something with the children." Irene adds:

> Both Hugh and I are quite highly motivated people and so we always have a busy schedule and it's amazing how we can immediately wind down when the children need our attention. I hope that will always be the case. (April.85.PI.A)

Now, at five, Dianna is always happy and enjoys her friends immensely. She is becoming more responsible for her own things. Reading knowledge is developing and continues to be important to child and parents. When her mother is concerned that she is not reading, and suggests several times that Dianna try reading to her rather than she to Dianna, her daughter responds unexpectedly. "She took the book right out of my hands and just read it. I couldn't speak!! It was wonderful . . . I feel that we've helped so much by reading to her a lot."

Rita and Dianna are "almost constant playmates when Dianna is not at school." The physical distance and the fact that the mother drives Dianna to school outside the local community, result in the sisters being together more often, rather than Dianna being with other peers. The closeness and insularity of the family is apparent--sharing yard work, play (rough and tumble with father) and five family vacation trips within the past year. Dianna chooses to write about her ski trip when she is asked to draw and tell about something involving her mother or father.

Irene's participation in the classroom develops her perspective on the range and/or variety of children's abilities and behaviours. She sees "how different children respond to the different situations, . . . [how] children do things differently . . . ; some are bright and alert, others are disinterested and naughty." This exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) link of shared observations helps make the mother's teaching "authentic." The teaching is based upon reference to concrete examples observed by both Dianna and her mother. Irene unconsciously becomes more effective--a teacher of healthy behaviours because she is able to watch the teacher's way of dealing with different individuals. Somewhat unconsciously, she recognizes this avenue for learning, thereby becoming more effective in her parenting role. The teacher has structured the environment effectively for this eager and receptive "parenting student."

Godparents living in the same city are influential others while grandparents have an impact through letter writing and longer, less frequent visits. The actions and ideas of those parents who have met through the children's classes, and who have become friends, contribute to the development of Mrs. Adams' perception of parent involvement. Grandparents actions have a limited influence from such a distance. Parent histories and upbringing are often an influence.

Mrs. Kruger (Kindergarten teacher) expresses the attitude that "parental involvement . . . in Kindergarten, should be as strong as the parents wish it to be." In this instance she seems to be defining parent involvement as physical presence of the parent in the classroom. She regards as "ideal," parents feeling "real freedom in coming along with their child to school." This applies to any part of a morning session. Dianna's mother, therefore, stays in the classroom for differing lengths of time. Rita shares time there as well because the mother is not expected to be there as an aid to the teacher every time that she stays. "Schooling" seems to really be an integrated part of Dianna's total learning environment because the knowledge and process links with home are strong. It really flows one to the other and back making learning real, relevant and dynamic for the child.

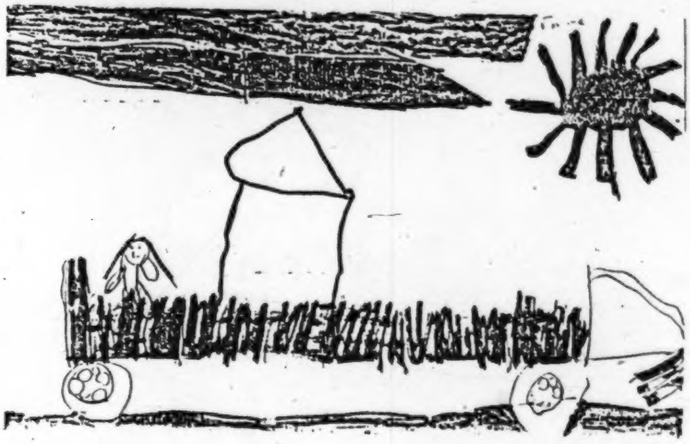
Summary - Parents' Perceptions

During the Kindergarten year, a positive aspect of being involved as a parent is feeling thrilled along with Dianna because she is reading. Parent involvement is also being on the LAC; being the PIPE representative. By being in the classroom once a month and helping in the program, Irene is learning a lot about child development. She is aware of the variety of experiences arranged for the children. She helps on field trips; participates in the snack program. Parent involvement is choosing a Kindergarten where the teacher "gets the best out of [everyone]" including children and parents. It is taking advantage of an "open-door" policy where the teacher convincingly, and continuously encourages participation by the parents in any way that is comfortable for them. Hugh and Irene Adams recall good feelings associated with their own parents' involvement with Hugh's and Irene's schooling. They use these recollections to determine what they can do to provide school experiences that will feel good for Dianna. Parent involvement is setting aside time everyday just for the children. It is "winding down" when the children need your attention.

The Adams Family - Grade One Year

Dianna's Book

> I tell my mom and dad about what I do at school. My mom and dad came to school for a meeting last spring in Kindergarten and in Merryland Preschool.
>
> I play sometimes with Billy and Matthew, sometimes with Carl and Ross, and sometimes my sister and Karla and Amanda.

> I help my mom. I wash the dishes sometimes but not very often. We went on a hayride; my mom and me and my sister.
>
> 
>
> There are two horses but it is here (pointing off the right-hand side of the page).
>
> I like to go outside and play on the swings. (March.84)

Redwood School Grade One Program

(see Emmerson)

Teacher's Perspective

(see Emmerson)

Dianna

Dianna's mother sees her as "very sociable." Irene comments:

> She mixes with a lot of the children. She doesn't just stick to one friend. She has a lot of friends. And, actually, mostly boys which has been a surprise to me because I always thought she was fairly afraid of boys. Frightened of playing rough and all that. But she seems to enjoy playing with

> the boys more than with the girls.
> (March.86.PI.A)

She describes Dianna's Grade One year at school:

> She seems to accept things probably more easily than I have done. Probably because she is so adaptable. She's adapted very quickly to the new teachers and the new classroom. It is such a change because I saw her in Preschool whenever I was the helping mom. She would cling on to me like a limpet. She wouldn't let me out of her sight when I was the helping mom. When we went to Kindergarten, she would come and sit with me when we were sitting in a circle or something like that and she would hang around me for awhile, but then she would go.
> (March.86.PI.A)

Parents' Perceptions of Involvement - Grade One Year

When asked what Dianna is like when she plays with other children, Irene shares her immediate recollection. She speaks in a tone that reflects some disappointment, but acceptance that it is really all right.

> M: She's usually the animal. She's still the animal. And they still expect her to be the animal because she's been it for so long. They ask her to be the dog or the horse.
>
> F: And she still enjoys being it as well.
>
> M: Unless I'm around and then she'll say, "My mom doesn't like me doing that. I'd better be the Mother or . . ."

Irene comments about time spent together:

> I'm the organizer, the driver, the helper in whatever she's involved with. We read together a lot; do crafts together. Lots of good feelings, especially pleasing when we have time alone together. Dianna loves to be my helper and likes to please and make me happy. (March.86.Q.A)

When Irene speaks about changes of teachers over the year (including six or seven long and short term substitute teachers) she believes it affected Dianna "very little actually."

> We've been extremely lucky. She's adapted very well to the different teachers. I don't say that she's particularly liked all the teachers. As far as I can ascertain, from what she's told me, she's just seemed to accept things as they are but looked forward to Mrs. Elliot coming back. (March.86.PI.A)

The Adams' continue:

> M: She seems to accept everything as it comes.
>
> F: She takes everything in her stride. Not very much seems to bother her, either academically or sociologically, if that's the right expression.
>
> M: [However,] Dianna has had a recurring stomach ache since Christmas which may have been flu, but may also have been her way of showing anxiety about school. And the hot water bottle was in big demand at home, perhaps showing her need for extra attention. (March.86.PI.A)

It seems certain that these parents' ideas concerning their involvement with schooling have been strongly influenced by experiences of the last three years. During this time, the teachers initiated, as well as advocated a multifaceted approach to effecting the sharing of environments. This continues with one of Dianna's teacher's in the Grade One year (the second long-term substitute). None of these teachers, however, employs home visits. Irene explains different teacher perspectives on parent involvement:

> The teacher of the Kindergarten [class] kind of involved the whole family. She would invite not just myself but Rita, and they had a Fathers' night. I was involved in the classroom. So I guess I was there quite a lot.
>
> But, Grade One is a closed-door kind of atmosphere and I don't really get [the opportunity to] go in there [to help]. I don't really see her at work any more. (March.86.PI.A)

Irene's attitude is likely a reflection of her needs as a mother and of three years (two Preschool years and the Kindergarten year) of teacher-initiated opportunities for shared environments. She elaborates:

> Probably it's just my feeling that it would be nice to still be involved. I don't know. Maybe it's harder because I've been used to being so involved. Maybe it's harder for me to let go. But I mean, I see other parents. Ruby Baker is one. She likes to help, too, and she's going into Grade Five now because she can't help in Grade One, so she may as well help in Suzie's class. And Alice Reimer is doing the same thing. Her boy is now in Grade Two and she's helping there [now but was unable to in Grade One.] And she's also helping in Grade Six with her daughter. So there's this feeling that mom's being there . . . I don't know whether it's the moms that want to be there actually, or the children. Maybe it's the moms. Maybe the moms just like to know how their kids are doing. (March.86.PI.A)

An underlying motivation for the Adams family seems to be a concern for keeping their children "on the right track in life." They hope to communicate to the children that they are interested and caring parents.

Continuity of learning experiences between home and school environments appears with the second permanent sub and evaporates with the return of teacher-centred instruction, product orientation, involvement that ends at the door and discouraged shared environments. Irene elaborates:

> I saw a lot of enthusiasm when the open-door policy and the centres were brought back into the classroom over the last two months. I mean Dianna brought countless things home. Projects to do. Science projects. They froze shapes. She froze a rubber glove full of water. They took them into the classroom and they measured the amount of time it took for each item to melt. [Used coloured water to spray the snow, started their own dictionaries.] I saw all this enthusiasm, with all the children actually. But now . . . well, actually, we have got an evaporation thing going on upstairs right now [but it hasn't been given a great deal of attention or interest with the return of the regular teacher]. (March.86.PI.A)

Irene Adams speaks of shared environments while expressing her feelings and talking about involvement. Her comments almost exclusively relate to the value of shared environments. In response to questionning about why she should be in the classroom she uses rational thought (devoid of feeling) and talks about assistance to effect a product. When Irene discusses her feelings, however, she centres on shared environments and speaks of being able to watch Dianna interacting with the teacher and other children in the program environment.

> I think it (a parent in the classroom) allowed the teacher to devote more time specifically to the group that she was looking after. If it was divided up into groups, then when she was working with one group, then she didn't have to keep her eyes in the back of her head on the others to see that everything was going all right. [So the children were receiving more individual attention.] Because there were other parents there to help, she could concentrate on a specific task. If Mrs. Elliot's a really good teacher, which I think she probably is, then she may be able to cope with that all by herself anyway. That was one of the impressions I got out of it. (March.86.PI.A)

Irene Adams intuitively understands the benefits of shared environments. Irene and Mrs. Elliot (Grade One teacher) do not understand each other's perspective. Mrs. Elliot appears unaware of the value of extensive and varied opportunities to effect shared environments. Though different, perspectives could be discussed. Irene elaborates on her frustration:

> I guess I tried to fight it [lack of encouragement of shared environments] in a very mild way. I kept approaching the teacher . . . "Could I do this?", or "Could I do that?" And I became very frustrated because I wasn't getting anywhere. It was just like a brick wall.
>
> One instance she mentioned to me that she didn't have anyone to do the library program. And so, I immediately spoke to Pamela Walker (another parent) and she and I approached Mrs. Elliot that [very] day and said, "We understand you don't have anyone for the library program and we'd like to

> offer to do it for you." [She said,] "Oh well, thank you very much, but we now have a new librarian, Mrs. Clarke, and she's going to undertake that for us. In fact, she's already started." So it was just [CLAP] (Irene claps). . . too late!
>
> I said, "If there's anything else we can do . . . cutting out for you or for the children, or listening to them read, putting up art work . . ."
> [She said,] "Well, thank you very much. We'll actually be having some field trips. So if you'd like to help on the field trips, that would be very useful." We've had no field trips. Not one! And each time that I approach her to do anything, that's the kind of answer I get. (March.86.PI.A)

Parent philosophy and attitude show clearly as Irene expresses her underlying feelings about parent involvement:

> I get such a kick out of seeing how they're developing. Seeing how they're coping with the situations that arise in the classroom. For me it's good to see how my child compares [cooperates and responds] with other children. I want to know that she's doing okay. The teacher tells me that she's doing okay. But it would be nice for me to see that. And I don't see it now [in Grade One]. The only time I see it is when she's going in the room and then when she's coming out at the end of the morning or the afternoon.
>
> Even when I take Dianna to school, I've asked the teacher, "How is Dianna doing in this or that or just generally?" Then, oh, I mean . . . the answer is just so general and vague that it's . . . [it seems almost] meaningless.
>
> Now I'm not in the classroom and I don't know. I just . . . I have no idea. I know they went to Art and I know they went to Music, [because I specifically asked Mrs. Elliot for a class schedule. She gave it to me verbally in the hallway.] . . . Rarely does anything specific ever come home. She

> doesn't verbalize on what they do.
> (March.86.PI.A)

Irene seems to feel whatever Dianna feels. The attachment is strong and is basic to the meaning she gives to parent involvement.

Summary - Parents' Perceptions

For the Adams' in the Grade One year, parent involvement with schooling is different from that in the Kindergarten year. Involvement is experiencing rebuttal from a teacher with a "closed-door" policy. It is receiving a "Thank you very much, but . . ." reply for any services offered. On one occasion it is deciding that the child's emotional well-being is more important than the teacher's decision that you can not come into the classroom. It is experiencing a feeling of being considered useless in the program setting. It is feeling uncomfortable when you ask and are allowed to stay for a party. Parent involvement is knowing that direct involvement does a lot for you as a parent. It is feeling that you do not know how Dianna is "really" doing. It is a feeling that the teacher, with very little communication on her part, expects the parent to know what the child is experiencing. It is specifically asking for a class schedule and getting it verbally in the hallway.

Dianna is now involved in Brownies. Testing other Brownies for their badges is a part of parent involvement. It is working with Dianna on her interest badges for

Brownies. More often, the parents are bystanders as Dianna participates on her own in more programs. There is family involvement in skiing and skating. Parents are the ones responsible for the children's behavioural attitudes toward other people. At home there is much talk about feelings because at their respective "school" programs, both children are talking about feelings. When the second long-term substitute teacher is with the Grade One class, the nature of parent involvement dramatically changes.

Parent involvement includes making dictionaries for use in the classroom and bringing in a book and tape to support theme work. Irene facilitates Dianna's participation in a class Science project because Dianna freezes water in the heart-shaped cat dish and in a rubber glove. Irene and her younger daughter are invited to see what happens to these shapes when they melt. Parent involvement is being aware of who is at school, knowing the teachers and knowing the atmosphere in the school.

Irene does not like driving everyday but does so in order to have contact with other parents, children and the teacher. Parent involvement is working with Dianna when she gets home. Dianna's father would like involvement to mean that he has good rapport with the teacher. For both parents it means making sure the child can see enthusiasm coming from home so she will feel school is something to "look forward to" and an adventure, and not something that you have "to put up with." Parent involvement is helping so the teacher has more time to give individual attention at different times to different children in turn.

In summary, Chapter IV presents interview, questionnaire and observation data from four families over the period of time in which one of their children attends Preschool, Kindergarten and Grade One. Specifically, it provides a description of four children, their program environments and their parents' and teachers' perceptions of parent involvement in each year. Children's booklets are also provided.

Chapter V presents a longitudinal analysis of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. The discussion focuses on a comparison of these perceptions in relation to the child and parent.

CHAPTER V

LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter focuses on changes in parents' (four families') perceptions on parent involvement within a three year period. Perceptions are made understandable in terms of parents' prior experience in parenting, a child's biological maturation and changing contexts (home, school and neighbourhood) for child and parent development. Parent and teacher perceptions of involvement are compared for each of the Preschool, Kindergarten and Grade One years. As a means for understanding these parent and teacher perceptions Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework for studying the ecology of human development is used.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 22) defines a microsystem as a "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics." Examples include family, school, neighbourhood peer group, and extracurricular programs and clubs. The interrelations between two or more of these microsystems in which the developing person participates, constitute a mesosystem. In the present research, respondents' descriptive accounts are analyzed by identifying major components of parents' and teachers' perspectives on parent involvement. These components are understood in terms of the changing nature and number of microsystems, and an emerging home-school mesosystem. For example, when a child is very young, parent involvement takes place primarily within the family microsystem. As the child becomes older, parent involvement is directed toward helping the child establish other microsystems such as those involving peers.

Prior Experience in Parenting

In the first year of the present study, the Blaine's and Adams' have their elder child entering Preschool. Julie Gordon and Matthew Emmerson are the third eldest children in their respective families. Whether or not the child is the eldest has an impact upon the particular knowledge applied by parents in understanding and carrying out activities of parental involvement.

The Emmerson's perspective on parent involvement and school is based almost exclusively upon visualizations of their experiences with their older sons' schooling. Because Matthew has older siblings his parents' knowledge of parent involvement has undergone change. For example, in connection with their older boys' previous school

(Kenmore), Ruth and Bob Emmerson experienced what they sensed were "obstructive parents." They believe their children's schooling was negatively affected by a small group of parents as in the instance where these parents pushed to have compulsory student participation in a school operetta. The Emmerson's believed that this activity was not educationally enhancing for their two eldest children. Therefore, in the Preschool year, Ruth talks about how a school should be chosen and remarks, "I never thought I'd be saying it but what you almost have to look for is an attitude of the parent group as a whole that is in accordance with your own" (May, 1984). She feels it is important to be involved with parents who have a similar perspective to her own on education, schooling and parent involvement relative to school.

Ruth's perception underscores the need for better communication and a mutually supportive environment. This example clearly establishes the interplay of a changing microsytem (school) and the parent's perspective on parent involvement.

Julie is the third eldest child in the Gordon family. Her parents have "dealt with" many learning environments and experiences. This accumulated knowledge likely makes their decision-making about Julie's learning environments more routine. In addition to schooling, family-based and community-based activities are added and changed in a routine and natural way. For example, Julie observes older siblings swimming and skiing and, then, participates when her development permits. Julie simply follows along with her older brother and sister. In the Kindergarten year, Dan comments, "It's almost a stream." It seems the Gordon's do not expend as much energy in decision-making about programs now as they did with their first child. Family involvement supplies energy and, therefore, not all of it has to come from parents. For example, the children turn to one another for help as when Julie reads to Jordan, and Adrienne reads to Julie.

Andrew Blaine and Dianna Adams are the elder children in their families. For the first time, their parents experience evolving school microsystems--the evolution of school contexts. In addition, new contexts for their child's learning are added during the research period. Lois Blaine gets support and direction from recent psychological literature on child development, and from her Co-op membership association and communication with other parents and teachers. Irene Adams gets more support from teachers than does Lois in terms of parent education. Irene receives support and education from parents of children who attend Redwood School (Preschool through Grade One years). Responses to researcher questions (Preschool and Kindergarten years) concerning future involvement with schooling are often speculative in nature. As parents they have no prior experiences to visualize (as do Gordon's and Emmerson's) when constructing their perceptions of parent involvement.

Thus, for the families in this study, parent perceptions of parent involvement are influenced by the degree to which adults have prior experience as parents in planning learning environments and experiences. School-aged children could benefit from teacher awareness of parents' prior parenting knowledge and experience. Teacher knowledge of family composition would also help the teacher determine and meet the needs of the child.

Maturation of the Child

Children's intellectual growth and evolving social relationships are mutually supportive in terms of their development. Children handle social relationships differently and experience them uniquely in different years. For example, in the Kindergarten year of the present study Lois Blaine comments that Andrew craves time with his friends, whereas in the Preschool year she states that he does not need peers to play with all the time. The Adams' describe Dianna in the Preschool year as somewhat shy and, therefore, content to be at home with family. However, in the Kindergarten year she is no longer seen as a shy child. Irene Adams remarks that Dianna "enjoys her friends immensely and seems to join in as much with the boys as the girls." Matthew's mother relates, "When they

(Matthew) hit five they get real social and especially if they're your youngest" (April, 1985). Thus, for each of the children in the study age five seems to be the point at which they become more independent. They begin to deal with situations on their own and seek to arrange peer social situations as the context for their learning. Child maturation, then, appears to influence parent involvement in the Preschool and Kindergarten years in two ways: child decision-making and time the child spends with parents.

In the Kindergarten and Grade One years, all parents permit their children more control in decision-making. Parents indicate that Matthew and Andrew, more often than in previous years, decide that play with peers is a higher priority than being with either parent. To a greater degree the parent feels confident about letting (trusting) the child to handle (control) for themselves, and/or deal with, situations experienced. Lois describes what she sees as a classic mother's dilemma:

> I am both happy and sad. Happy that he is going out on his own more, developing and growing up, but sad to not have him around more. (March.86.Q.B)

Physical development, as distinguished from development of mental capacities, is more obviously a focus for some parents than for others. For some, physical development is a factor when describing changes in their actions and reactions to children's actions. For example, in the Kindergarten year, Matthew's size, as compared to others at the same grade level and to his brothers when they were at the same age, causes the parents to feel he is not really tough enough for school.

The child's intellectual and physical maturation, then, may influence a parent's perceptions of parent involvement.

Evolving Microsystems: Home, School and Community Programs

In the present study the children's contexts for knowledge acquisition are expanding and increasing in number. In the Kindergarten year and more so in the Grade One year, children are involved with formalized classes such as Beavers, Brownies, skiing, skating and swimming. Lois Blaine speaks of only two times during the week when both Andrew and John (his best friend) are "free." Andrew's voice seems to indicate that he feels he has a schedule that is bothersome to remember and outline for the researcher. Slowly and begrudgingly he relates, "Monday I have Beavers and yesterday was music." The Blaine's support the notion that Andrew's experiences need to be diverse. Parent involvement is creating opportunities for stimulation through exposure to a variety of activities.

During the research period, it seems that in both school and out-of-school learning environments much of a child's "playtime" is gradually replaced by activities having adult-determined rules and extrinsic rewards. In

Grade One, Andrew Blaine clearly expresses his understanding of play, work and schooling when he states, "At home you've got a lot of stuff you can do. At school you 'gotta' do work" (March, 1986)! Erickson (1977) makes a distinction betweem the self-directedness of pre-school "play" and the other-directedness of school "work."

> There, [in school] . . . play is transformed into work, game into competition and cooperation, and the freedom of imagination into the duty to perform with full attention to the techniques which make imagination communicable, accountable, and applicable to defined tasks. (p. 104)

In the Grade One year, children are more often taken to programs and left with other adults--other teachers. Ruth Emmerson has high expectations concerning the way adult time with children should be spent. She believes adults should be trying to make this time a learning experience for her children. Her expectations affect the choice of programs for Matthew and the groups with which he is involved. He is in Pathfinders because she knows the leader well and respects the way she interacts with children.

For the children in the study it is clear that both school and extracurricular programs dramatically reduce the amount of time the mother has with her child. All mothers recognize a role change where they devote less time to planning learning activities. This changes the nature of the home microsystem. The present research shows that in the first year, each child spends five or seven and a half hours in a "school" program. In Kindergarten, the children are involved in the program twelve and a half hours and in Grade One they are in the program for 25 hours a week. The children are with their fathers about the same amount of time throughout the study because the father's time available to share with his children must come in evenings and on weekends.

The nature of parent involvement changes as more adults are presenting the child with learning activities. To a greater extent, time at home is for "regrouping" and planning. In the Grade One year, the home provides the materials, motivation and setting for activities less often than during the Preschool and Kindergarten years. The nature of school-related and community-based activities is increasingly different from those activities in which the child freely engages at home. Parent attention to the child's learning that results from these activities, changes parents' perception of parent involvement. In the Grade One year, it is more often a necessity that the parent understand and deal with the child's behaviour (i.e., competetive attitude) without a confident understanding and feeling for how and why it has developed.

The Evolving Mesosystem

A mesosystem of home-school is established when there is participation by the child in the microsystems of home and school. Parents are directly involved in the establishment of a home-school mesosystem and may help establish others such as those involving children's peers. Parents have the control; they are the teachers, facilitators in the microsystem of family. In a school microsystem the teacher has control. A sharing of control in the mesosytem is one of the things Bronfenbrenner (1979) feels will enhance development of all participants. This is the "partnership" that is advocated in early childhood education literature on parent involvement. A sharing of knowledge between parent and teacher seems to develop an atmosphere for reciprocal support that is implicit in such a partnership. A sharing of knowledge may build the trust to accept and relinquish power as is necessary to enhance a child's development.

Bronfenbrenner believes that:

> Development at this level will be enhanced to the extent that processes of interchange between settings are bidirectional, sustain and enhance mutual trust and goal consensus, and exhibit a balance of power favourable to those linking parties who facilitate action in behalf of the developing person. (p. 218)

This section of Chapter V focuses on the "processes of interchange between settings" of home and school for the participants of this study. These processes are made understandable by considering (1) the extent and nature of shared environments, (2) parents' and teachers' perceptions of parent and teacher roles, and (3) the extent of mutual support between parent and teacher. In the ensuing discussion, a description of the development of parents' perceptions of involvement relative to schooling is presented. The degree to which child and parent development are enhanced or inhibited is illuminated.

Extent and Nature of Shared Environments

In the present study, the principal mesosystem examined is that of shared home-school activities, roles and relations. On a pragmatic level, Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that those interconnections between home and school that enhance child development have four characteristics: (1) more frequent interaction between parents and school personnel; (2) a greater number of persons known in common by members of the two settings; (3) more frequent communications between home and school; and (4) more information in each setting about the other (p. 218). However, such interconnections ought not to:

> undermine the motivation and capacity of those persons who deal directly with the child to act in his behalf. This qualification gives negative weight to actions by school personnel that degrade parents and to parental demands that undermine the professional morale or effectiveness of the teacher. (Bronfenbrenner, p. 218)

In essence, Bronfenbrenner supports the hypothesis that the more knowledge two parties "share" or have in common about a particular microsystem, and the greater the mutual support, the more effective each party will be at enhancing child development within and outside that microsystem.

Mrs. Oliver, the Merryland Preschool teacher, initiates and consistently encourages parent participation in the activities of the class. No restrictions are placed on the parent staying with the child to make sure the child feels safe and comfortable. Mrs. Oliver does not participate in the children's home environments, however, except when she is invited to homes at the initiation of some parents.

This Preschool teacher seems to feel a moral responsibility as a professional educator to be a teacher of parents. She realizes that this part of her teaching responsibility can be facilitated by parents participating in the program. Mrs. Oliver observes that parents have opportunities to share ideas amongst themselves and learn from seeing how the teacher interacts with the children when they come in and stay to help in the classroom. The parents described in this thesis seem to get satisfaction from their ability to meaningfully extend class activities outside the program environment.

Three of Dianna Adams' and Matthew Emmerson's teachers (Mrs. Oliver in Preschool, Mrs. Kruger in Kindergarten and the second long-term substitute in Grade One) initiate and encourage parents' sharing of experiences with children in the program environment. This is also true of Andrew

Blaine's Kindergarten teacher, Mme. Zarek. These teachers see parent participation in the program environment as one means of facilitating continuity in a child's learning experiences at home and at school. Other means include notes sent home to parents, informal telephone conversations between teacher and parent, and report cards. In addition to an "open-door policy" in the Kindergarten program, Mrs. Kruger and Mme. Zarek make available a variety of ways parents can enhance communication in the home-school mesosystem. These include a Fathers' Night, bulletin board with recent information on early childhood education and project-oriented home activities for the children.

Julie Gordon's Kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Leighton, does not encourage parent participation in the program but she feels communication is good between herself and each of the mothers. She has taught at the school for a number of years. She has a small class; therefore, frequent one-to-one discussion with mothers is logistically manageable. The Gordon's are satisfied that they are knowledgeable about what Julie experiences at school.

Mrs. Elliot does not initiate opportunities for parents' direct observation of their children in the Grade One program environment. Irene Adams makes several attempts to initiate action to bring it about but she is unsuccessful. When she offers help she is confronted by the teacher with "Thank you very much, but . . ." (March, 1986). Perhaps Irene has a strong feeling about this rejection because she not only has experienced support in the past but, also, has been a "student" of parent education within early childhood programs for the last three years.

Irene would like to participate as a parent helper in Mrs. Elliot's Grade One classroom. She would then be able to observe Dianna's interactions with other children and acquire information that would enhance communication between home and school. As it is, Irene Adams feels a void. In a sense she is "thrown out of school." She welcomes educational opportunities that facilitate her development in parenting. However, this teacher's action thwarts Irene's desire to be an involved parent. Irene seems to feel that this action limits her effectiveness at facilitating Dianna's development because she can not supplement and support the schoolwork meaningfully. She can not articulate her daughter's learning experiences at home with what Dianna experiences at school. In short, Irene Adams' role as teacher and learner is undermined: involvement as she has experienced it in the past is frustrated and parent education is not a component of this Grade One program.

In the Grade One year, Ruth Emmerson initiates action to share in Matthew's experiences at school but is "put in her place" early. The teacher reminds her that this is not Kindergarten any more. Ruth "accepts" this while the established teacher (Mrs. Elliot) is in charge, but feels uncomfortable when it continues with a substitute teacher. As it turns out, when the first long-term substitute teacher is employed, Ruth feels her concern and disapproval of "closed doors" is well founded because, in her mind, this teacher is not effective with Matthew.

In the Grade One year, parents in the study supplement what is done at school. In all cases the communication seems to be more formal than it is in Kindergarten. Patricia Gordon (Julie's mother) feels parents should not be "running to the teacher" at any time to ask how their child is doing. She feels reporting periods are set up and those are appropriate times to find out how one's child is doing. Emmerson's and Adams' wait two months before there is a report but feel uneasy about not knowing more about their child's experience at school. The Blaine's learn about Andrew at a parent-teacher interview that Carl feels is merely a public relations activity. In the Grade One year, all but one of the teachers (the second long-term substitute at Redwood) is not as concerned about supporting the parent in a teaching role outside the school as are the Preschool and two of the Kindergarten teachers.

Some avenues for communication between fathers and the child's school activities in the Preschool, Kindergarten and Grade One years include child conversation, newsletters, parent-teacher interviews and Open House. The nature of these means for communication varies between programs and, therefore, its effectiveness varies in terms of enhancing the child's development. In the Grade One year, Carl Blaine relies on Andrew's attitude more than in previous years. He feels he would know "pretty quickly" by Andrew's actions if there was something really wrong at school. He believes that Andrew can not hide his feelings very well. In the Grade One year, mothers are no longer able to communicate their observations as participants in the program environment to their husbands.

For each of the Preschool, Kindergarten and Grade One years there is a difference in the nature of shared environment opportunities for fathers compared with those for mothers. Although Hugh Adams has acted as a parent helper in the Preschool program and Dan Gordon has helped with an all school Bicycle program and gained knowledge of Julie's interrelationships with peers and teacher through observation, these are exceptions. For fathers, parent involvement in schooling tends to be secondhand. The amount of school support for a father in his parenting role appears to be minimal.

An underlying issue in teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement in schooling seems to be whether or not the teacher should do what is possible within the program environment to facilitate the child's education outside of it. Does the learning within the classroom need to have ties with learning outside the classroom? Many educators feel a connection is crucial to real learning: assimilation and accommodation, acquisition of action knowledge, authenticity (Barnes, 1975; Eisner, 1983; Katz, 1984). In general, the teacher may permit parents to gain knowledge about their children's actions and about learning and "child knowledge." Should this be a responsibility of all professional educators?

All teachers in the study express the attitude that good communication between parents and teacher is important. There is a great deal of variance, however, in the extent to which the practices of the teacher and parent actually make good communication possible. It seems that the teacher's perspective on parent involvement, more so than the parent's, determines the nature and extent of opportunities for shared environments. Becker (1981) suggests teachers do not know how to effectively incorporate parents as a resource. With respect to the seven school microsystems discussed in this thesis, parents' responses indicate that their knowledge of these environments increases when the means for communication between home and school (shared environments) is varied and when it meets the needs of child and parents.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) hypothesizes that in the mesosytem, as in the microsystem, there are three functional parameters: reciprocity, balance of power and affective relation. These parameters are important elements of parents' and teachers' perceptions of parent involvement. They are discussed in the context of parent and teacher roles, and mutual support in the two sections that follow.

Roles of Parent and Schoolteacher: Extent of Mutual Support

Katz (1984) outlines "distinctions between mothering and [school]teaching" (p. 4). She explains that the functions a mother performs are diffuse and limitless, whereas those of a schoolteacher are specific and limited. Katz feels the intensity of affect (all kinds) is high for parents and low for schoolteachers. She sees a mother's actions reflecting optimal attachment, irrationality and spontaneity, whereas a teacher's actions reflect optimal detachment, rationality and intentionality. Katz defines attachment as "the capacity to be aroused to a wide range of behaviors and intense feelings by the status and behavior of the child" (p. 9). She points out that a mother's main responsibility is for her child as an individual, while the schoolteacher's main concern is for the whole class. Katz realizes that these distinctions are not mutually exclusive. There is overlap in terms of what parents and teachers perceive, and accept as their modus operandi when carrying out their responsibilities. More specifically, Katz (1984) points out:

> To teachers [and mothers] in preschools and primary schools, the distinctions are problematic precisely because of the age of the child: the younger the child, the wider the range of functioning for which adults [parent and schoolteacher] must assume responsibility (p. 7).

This is relevant to the present study in that parent and teacher perceptions of their roles and responsibilities relative to the child's education are basic to the nature of the mesosystem.

As the nature of the home-school mesosystem evolves over the three-year period, its characteristics are determined to some extent by how teachers and parents see their own roles as well as how they see each other's role. Considering the extent of environmental change taking place, it is understandable that a mother may perceive her role changing significantly from year to year. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that "roles have a magiclike power to alter how a person is treated, how she acts, what she does, and thereby even what she thinks and feels" (p. 6). Therefore, mothers or fathers may be treated differently by teachers because the teachers perceive the parent's role differently from the parent.

Mrs. Oliver feels she has two major roles as a teacher in the Preschool Cooperative program: teacher of children and teacher of parents. With respect to her role as the child's teacher the interchange between Mrs. Oliver and parents is bidirectional. For example, Mrs. Oliver realizes the parent knows the child far better than she does. She has very little time with each child; therefore, she can only hope that parents address at home what she is trying to encourage socially in the Preschool. She feels her efforts can be effective only if the child is supported in a similar way at home. However, the dominant feeling held by Mrs. Oliver seems to be that the teacher has more to offer the parent toward enhancing the child's development, than the parent has for the teacher. Parents seem to accept this. They express a trust in the teacher. Ruth Emmerson declares, "Karen is just really doing what she is suited to do; a real touch with children" (May.84.PI.E).

Apart from accepting that she is the child's teacher, Mrs. Oliver assumes parent education as a part of her teaching assignment. As an experienced parent, she feels the acquisition of parenting skills is haphazard and inadequate. She believes Preschools need to become part of the Public School system because, in her mind, parents need education towards enhancing their child's development. Thus, Mrs. Oliver's perspective appears to contain an element of control. The fact that parents are required to act as helpers allows her opportunities for considerable influence in the home-school mesosystem. Mrs. Oliver acts as a coach for both children and parents in the program setting, but most of the "game" is played outside the Preschool environment.

Mrs. Oliver indicates that the parents who are respondents in this study are open to learning about parenting. She trusts their intentions and concerns. In sum, Mrs. Oliver believes being a student of child development is a part of parent involvement. It is unclear from the findings the extent to which parents share this attitude in the Preschool year.

In Kindergarten, the teacher has more time (five days a week) to be directly involved with the children than the teacher has in the Preschool environment. Mandatory parent helpers do not exist in any of the Kindergarten programs. In the Kindergarten programs at Redwood and Blue Lake, there is considerable mutual support between the parents in this study (Emmerson's, Adams' and Blaine's) and the teachers (Mrs. Kruger and Mme. Zarek). On the other hand, the Gordon's (Oakland Elementary) appear to support the school program and the teacher to a greater degree than the teacher supports their efforts outside the program environment. Reciprocity is greater at Redwood and Blue Lake because these teachers consciously address parent education. They are aware of, and take action to enhance the child's education outside the program environment.

In the program at Oakland Mrs. Leighton, by her actions, does not reflect the feeling that parent education and articulation of a child's learning inside and outside the program environment are aspects she must address. In the case of the Gordon's, it appears that parent participation as viewed by both the teacher and the parent is needed only to help the program run smoothly. Activities such as field trips and kindercooking require extra adult help.

The same attitude concerning lack of teacher support of parents continues in the Grade One year for the Gordon's as Julie has the same teacher. Gordon's continue to support the program to a greater degree than the teacher supports them as teachers outside the program. Dan Gordon is well known in the community and is one on whom teachers can depend for extra help. It seems that at least once a year each of Julie's parents can expect to be involved in a special event. At different times every year, each of them can be counted on to volunteer and support the school. This is in addition to Patricia's regular, dependable assistance with field trips, school swimming lessons and skating.

According to Bob Emmerson, Mrs. Elliot (Grade One teacher) believes that a child in Grade One should be capable of handling the experience in the classroom independently. The Emmerson's perceive this teacher's words and actions as an indication that Ruth Emmerson must be willing to "let go" because it is time for Matthew to handle this situation on his own. Bob and Ruth do not agree with Mrs. Elliot's point of view. The teacher believes it is better for the child if the mother does not participate in the program environment. Bob remarks:

> One of the things she said to Ruth was "You know this isn't Kindergarten." Kind of pat, pat on the back, "Now don't you worry little mother. It's not going to hurt." (March, 1986)

The mother perceives this as undermining her role both as an advocate for her child and as a "teacher."

Mrs. Elliot, on the other hand, appears to feel that these "parental demands" undermine her professional authority and, possibly, her effectiveness as a teacher. Although she has a reputation for being a good reading teacher, she may feel defensive if she thinks the main or only reason parents want to observe in the program environment is so that they can act as advocates for their children. Mrs. Elliot believes parental observation serves no purpose and is disruptive. It is, therefore, not part of the parents' role and not part of parent involvement. Furthermore, it is not a part of her role to be a teacher of parents. Emmerson's accept this because they are confident Matthew will do well with Mrs. Elliot. Adams' (particularly Irene) are more upset because the opportunity for Irene to share vicariously in what Dianna experiences in school is sorely missed.

The Blaine's have chosen a French Immersion program for Andrew. Andrew Blaine's Grade One teacher, Mme. Marceau, does not encourage parent participation in the program environment. One stated reason for this is that parents need to be able to speak with the children in French. Lois feels she knows less about what Andrew experiences at school than she did in previous years. To some degree, she accepts that her role is changing and that it is understandable that she would know less about what Andrew does at school. However, she is not completely comfortable with the situation. Mme. Marceau gives no indication that she sees within her role a need to attend to concerns regarding articulation of the child's learning inside and outside the program environment or to parent education. She sees the parent's role supporting the school program.

Phenomenological Differences: Tensions

Communication affects the nature of parent involvement and is reflected in its phenomenology. Parents' feelings about their children are closely related to their understanding of each child's environments and perspectives on learning. To the extent that there is meaningful communication between home and school, the parent will be better able to facilitate the child's development.

Fullan (1982) states that "There is a tension [phenomenological differences] among the teacher, parent and child perspectives which may be greater or less, depending on the circumstances" (p. 205). These tensions seem to relate to the amount of knowledge and understanding by teachers and parents of each other's subjective worlds. They represent a sharing of perspectives--informing each other of one's assumptions, motives and intentions. Tensions, or phenomenological differences are feelings emanating from interrelationships. Fullan regards the differences between parents and teacher as a powerful, largely untapped resource that is potentially available to professional educators.

Tensions underlie parent involvement. While the intensity of the feeling varies, all mothers in the study relate that they do not understand their child's behaviour all the time, or in quite the same way in the Grade One year as in previous years. The children in the Preschool year are seldom away from their mothers. Andrew's father states that at this time Lois is always able to explain specifically why Andrew is behaving as he is.

Ruth Emmerson, Irene Adams and Lois Blaine feel a strong "need to know" by direct contact with the program environment. They seem to feel that their effectiveness as parents is limited if they can not observe their children for themselves. Irene and Lois wonder if it is really just a need a mother has. Lois believes that Andrew would feel uncomfortable if she was to stay because no one else's mother stays. She also does not think he would want her coming to the classroom door to meet him because he likes to walk out with his buddies.

Patricia Gordon on the one hand states she misses being there to see what the children are doing but, on the other hand, accepts this as "a natural evolution in the learning process." Her feeling is that the job of parenting can be done equally well if she is never present in the classroom when it is in session.

Ruth Emmerson "knows" involvement changes after Kindergarten. Previous experience with older children has furnished her with this knowledge. She expresses a feeling of resignation to a situation that is "fait accompli."

Patricia Gordon and Irene Adams partially fulfill their need to be involved in their children's schooling through the Preschool program of a younger sibling. For Irene this does not diminish her desire to be a participant observer in Dianna's classroom. She has little recourse but to accept not being in the classroom. However, on one occasion she insisted that she stay when she felt Dianna would be upset if she was not there. She feels it bothers her more than it does Dianna although she mentioned Dianna often wanting the hot water bottle at night. She makes a connection between Dianna's requests for the hot water bottle and the fact that there have been many different teachers for the Grade One class. While Dianna does not say she is bothered by these changes her mother can not be in the program environment to "read" any emotional uncertainty on Dianna's part. Patricia knows it is "unorthodox" behaviour to insist upon being a participant in the program environment and does not do so.

The fathers in the Grade One year are never in the program when the children are participating. Neither are the mothers, except when there is a long-term substitute teacher for Mrs. Elliot. The second long-term substitute initiates and encourages parents to share in activities within the program. Irene Adams is able and willing; she thoroughly enjoys being there. She and her younger child, Rita, are encouraged to stay. Irene relates that she vicariously experiences Rita's and Dianna's enthusiasm. When she comes in to make dictionaries without Rita, she feels the extra hands that provide materials for the children's learning ultimately help Dianna.

Ruth Emmerson accepts a paid, part-time position at the school in the Grade One year but it does not involve her with the Grade One class. She expresses a feeling of regret that she is not able to take advantage of this openness and initiative on the part of the second long-term substitute--to have parents experience the environment and the learning along with the child.

For a variety of reasons the Grade One teachers do not feel there is a need for parents to be present in the classroom when the children are there. Mrs. Leighton remarks, "I couldn't find a sensible way to include them." Mme. Marceau believes that parents are not in the classroom because they can not speak French. Mrs. Elliot sees no purpose in a parent "just sitting" and observing in the classroom.

While Ruth Emmerson and Irene Adams are not happy with Mrs. Elliot's approach they are not worried because this teacher has a good reputation. When she suddenly becomes ill and the first long-term substitute replaces her, parents are still not permitted access to the classroom to observe what the children experience with this teacher. The school principal communicates this teacher's credentials to parents in writing. Parents must wait and experience limited communication while their children spend time with a teacher about whom they know very little. Ruth Emmerson feels this teacher does not aid Matthew's development. In her mind Matthew begins to believe he can not read. He starts calling himself a "dummy" and saying he is stupid.

Communication is poor with both of these teachers but, because the regular teacher has taught at the school for many years, she has developed credibility within the community. Ruth Emmerson does not feel good about the poor contact she has with this part of Matthew's education, but in her child advocacy role, she is confident the environment is supportive. With the first long-term substitute there is no avenue to carry out her role as an advocate for her child. She is not able to do her job. She feels guilty because she believes Matthew is adversely affected. Her parenting responsibilities are undermined.

When the second long-term substitute is hired, Ruth talks directly with her and expresses "very real" concerns about Matthew. This teacher assesses and addresses children's individual needs. She explicitly communicates the children's needs to the parents and suggests ways they can help. She is very approachable. Consequently, Ruth has confidence that this teacher can and will work with her to improve Matthew's feeling about himself as a reader.

Ruth Emmerson describes an aspect of her personality as "strong parenting feelings." She feels she is the type of person who needs involvement that allows her to "see for herself." She wants enough knowledge of the school experience and contact with the boys outside of school to ensure both the maintainance of her role as her child's advocate and the control and direction of family dynamics. When she is able to develop a partnership with a teacher she has a very positive feeling about both her and the teacher being effective at enhancing Matthew's development.

Intense affect is a component of parent involvement. Newson and Newson (cited in Katz, 1984, p. 405) relate that for healthy personality development, a child "needs to know that to someone . . . [he] matters more than other children; that someone will go to unreasonable lengths, not just reasonable ones, for . . . [his] sake." In this study, parents act on strong feelings ranging from exhilaration and thrill to extreme frustration. This is the affective element; the phenomenological component of parent involvement. If the perceptions of parent involvement that underlie strong feelings are understood, a teacher has a powerful resource upon which to call, when attempting to enhance a child's development.

The Macrosystem

The macrosystem as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) centres on the idea that for microsystems and mesosytems there are elements in a subculture that are consistent; for example, all families chose the Merryland Cooperative Preschool. It is as though this aspect of parent involvement followed a common "blueprint." Other characteristics of this macrosystem include an increase in the number of formalized classes over the years of the study and a change in the nature of those classes: play-based Preschool and Kindergarten programs replaced by component-oriented Grade One programs. The choice of school and neighbourhood is another element of the macrosystem. The four sets of parents chose a school they felt fit their perspective on education. With this in mind they considered where they would buy a house. This choice is an expression of the macrosystem model, or blueprint, that describes their actions.

The parents in the study are a select group whose macrosystem is similar in many ways. They expect a high level of communication in the Preschool year (interviews; newsletters; informal conversation) and choose a program that expects a high level of involvement (parent helpers; attendance at meetings). They want to know about, and share in what the child experiences (classroom observation; field trips). They have real choice as to what program they may select for their children and the extent to which they and their children may participate (orientation meeting; many parents involved in support positions). But these children are not yet in the school system.

The element of choice is significantly reduced in Kindergarten and Grade One years because regular attendance in grade school is an expectation of the macrosystem, whereas Preschool attendance is optional. For example, in the Kindergarten year, the Gordon's have Julie attend the neighbourhood school. The extent to which the choice of this particular program is a "pure" choice is less than it was in the previous year. They are not readily going to "pull the plug" on this community. The decision was ultimately made ten years ago when the Gordon's purchased their home. Furthermore, two older siblings previously attended the school in which Julie is now enrolled (Oakland). Julie's new teacher, Mrs. Leighton, has taught both her older brother and sister. This teacher has a traditional approach that is consistent with the Gordon's perspective on education and represents a variation within the macrosystem.

For the most part, the four families in the Kindergarten year operate within the same macrosystem that encompasses variations such as differences in perspective on child development. For example, Blaine's perspective is contemporary while the Gordon's is traditional. The Adams' perspective on child development is different from both of these because they recently immigrated and were part of a different macrosystem as children.

Consistencies exist within the school aspect of the macrosystem. For example, time is under the control of the school system and not the child, parent or teacher. The Grade One programs observed are component-oriented. There is more evidence of extrinsic rewards and teacher-centred approaches than was evident in Kindergarten and Preschool classes. Parents in the Grade One year seem resigned to some loss of control with respect to their input into decision-making about the child's school learning environment as compared with Kindergarten and Preschool years.

A parent's perspective has at its foundation an idealism in terms of the nature and degree of parent involvement desirable and the nature of learning activites advocated. Realization of this ideal is most nearly possible when the child's sphere of influence is limited, as in early childhood before the child goes to school. For example, Blaine's are adamant that a child's personality is determined by four years of age. In essence, for the Blaine's, this means that parents need to set values and use moral suasion early while the child's contexts for acquisition of knowledge are narrow and highly dependent upon parents. Greater idealism concerning expectations of the school seem apparent when the first child is about to enter the school system. By contrast, the Gordon's support traditional ideas about family, education and parent involvement. It seems they can maintain this ideal.

Further manifestations of adherence to a particular macrosystem include the extent to which the mother identifies with a parent group. Irene Adams receives a lot of support for parenting from the school parent group in all three years. Perspectives on education and perceptions of parent involvement in schooling are compatible with those of other parents at this school. None of the parents described in the study opt out; that is, choose to not have their children at school. The choice of schooling or not schooling is not a "real" one. This may be due to macrosystem characteristics that include the financial burden to educate the child in another way both in terms of hours of adult time that could be used to earn money and tax dollars paid to public schools.

Carl Blaine articulates his perspective on schooling--one that appears to represent those of the three other families with the possible exception of the Gordon's. Carl feels that parents and child are the "active factor"--not the school. He believes that learning is the responsibility of the learner. This seems to reflect a child-centred or learner-centred philosophy of learning. He believes that school allows the child to learn and to socialize. At the end of the Grade One year, he expresses the feeling that people expect far too much of schools. In essence, he seems to be saying that schools are there to carry on normalization of children to understand the macrosystem but "education" is the responsibility of the child and the parent.

In summary, Chapter V discusses changes in parents' perceptions of parent involvement over the three years of the study as they relate to child and parent development. Chapter VI discusses what it means to be an involved parent; states general conclusions; and suggests implications for educators and parents. The researcher reflects upon her interactions with the parents and teachers of this study and her own perception of parent involvement.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, REFLECTIONS

This is a study of parents' perceptions of parent involvement. It centres on parents' experiences in facilitating their child's development in the early schooling years. The study reveals differences in the way four sets of parents acted out what they perceived to be their roles and responsibilities relative to their child's education. Similarly, it highlights the diversity in their perspectives on child growth and development, functions of schooling, and the degree of communication between home and school.

General Conclusions

It is helpful to keep in mind those aspects of child growth and development that are biologically based and socially constructed. Because of the age of the children in this study, the nature and extent of their abilities changed markedly from one year to the next. It follows that parents' roles changed quickly and dramatically. This role change was influenced by factors such as a lessening of parent control, reduced contact time with the child, family dynamics such as sibling rivalry, and degree of shared perspectives between schoolteacher and parent.

To differing degrees, parents accepted that their child should have more power to determine learning environments. Parents also relinquished power to teachers in both school-based and community-based programs during the time the child was with them, both in terms of choosing curricula and time the child is with another adult. In the Grade One year, children exercised power by choosing to spend more time with peers than with parents. To a greater extent the child determined the nature of the involvement with the parent.

All parents studied perceived themselves as teachers. They believed they were responsible for instilling attitudes and imparting values: enculturating their children. With some variation in degree, parents were concerned that the values their children learned at school and in the community be similar to theirs.

These parents see schooling as only one part of education. They are aware of, and accept the responsibility for facilitating the child's learning outside the school environment. These parents accept the responsibility for the total education of their children. They monitor their child's activities and are, thus, informed. When things fall short of what they want for their child, they take action. In one case this action took the form of withdrawing the child from a particular community-based class. On another occasion, a parent spoke to a teacher and principal at different times about "real concerns." At home, action involved sending both children to their rooms when the younger displayed unacceptable behaviour that could have only been learned through example from the older child. It involved the parent providing "tutoring" in skiing to allow for "one-upmanship," considered by one parent to be needed by all children. Planning for one on one was done to "solidify the parent-child relationship." Parents accepted the teaching of life skills as their responsibility. These parents supplied those things necessary for what they perceived to be optimal opportunities for enhanced development of both themselves and their children.

While observing their children, these mothers and fathers appeared to practise "thoughtfulness:" "a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement--a heedful, mindful wondering about" the meaning their child gives to his or her life (see Mother's and Father's Descriptions in Chapter IV). Parents often talked about watching their children to understand their behaviour.

For parents described in the study, three key elements (as far as parent involvement in the home-school mesosystem is concerned) may be identified that enhance a child's development; that is, educate the child:

1. opportunites for parent participant observation;

2. existence of a parent education component in the program; and
3. articulation of the child's learning (method and knowledge development) inside the program environment with that outside of it.

The Preschool teacher, more than any of the other teachers, was consciously aware of planning and incorporating a parent education component into the program. The Preschool teacher and two of the Kindergarten teachers provided opportunities for parent participation in the program environment that seemed to have a two-fold objective: helping-hands to administer the program, and participant observation by mothers to aid in articulating the child's learning inside the school environment with that outside. The third Kindergarten teacher seemed to be consciously aware of only the first objective in her planning. This is not to say that the second objective was not accomplished. Only one of the Kindergarten teachers expressed concern that she contribute to the development of parents' learning about parenting; that is, parent education. The Grade One teachers (with the exception of the second long-term substitute at Redwood) appeared to minimally concern themselves with articulation of the child's learning inside and outside the program environment by such means as newletters, and home reading programs. In this instance, a parent education component and participant observation in the program environment were all but non-existent.

When describing parent involvement the Preschool teacher in this study spoke as much from the perspective of a parent as from that of a Preschool teacher. From her comments it was apparent that she was close to, and had a vested interest in the contemporary issues relative to a description of parent involvement in the home-school mesosystem.

In the interview session, Kindergarten teachers varied in what they offered as personal knowledge and experiences as part of their perspective on parent involvement. Perhaps because interviews were done in the school (Ogbu cited in LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), some respondents gave the researcher what appeared to be skewed accounts, speaking of parent involvement only in the home-school mesosystem. However, they all offered the researcher some information about the structure of their own immediate families.

Traditionally, teachers have not been required to share personal knowledge and history with students and parents. This is being questioned more recently as research suggests that personal knowledge contributes to a teacher's perspective on children, teaching, learning and parent involvement. It seems it is of educational benefit to the child for teacher and parents to strive for depth in the knowledge they share because each will better understand the child's experience. With a traditional attitude concerning the sharing of perspectives, it is understandable that Mrs. Elliot restricted the nature of the information she shared to that attained while employed as a professional. Mrs. Leighton and Mme. Marceau spoke at length about personal experiences outside the role of schoolteacher that affect their ideas about teaching. In all fairness, this researcher's probing for in-depth information from teachers was not a part of this study's design. If teachers chose to elaborate in depth, it was of their own volition. They thought it important to do so.

In terms of home-school interconnections, the nature of parent involvement is "coloured" by the extent to which parent and teacher share perspectives on child development, learning, and parent actions. For example, knowing a teacher in a personal way may allow a parent to feel comfortable that this teacher will report to the parent when a child's behaviour is not up to the mother's standards. Knowing the degree of importance the mother places on caring behaviour supplies the teacher with knowledge applicable to enhancing the child's development. This study underscores the reduction in the degree to which teacher and parent perspectives are known to one another in the Grade One year as compared with Kindergarten and Preschool years.

The parents in this study were in a position to initiate and establish good communication with the schoolteacher. In many instances, the degree to which extensive and effective sharing of environments that occurred was determined more by the teacher's attitude to, or perception of need than by the parent's. It appears from this study that teachers still hold the power in terms of the nature of the activites, roles and relations within the mesosystem of home-school. Assuming that is true, the teacher's acceptance of responsibility for initiating effective means for sharing environments is necessary. A partnership is the schoolteacher's responsibility if it is assumed that it is educationally enhancing for the child. Because of teacher education, the professional educator is, perhaps, more likely to realize the benefits of extensive and varied opportunities for shared environments than is the parent. Therefore, it seems appropriate that a teacher take responsibility for developing an effective working plan.

What about parents who are not in a position to initiate the development of effective shared environments? What is the effect on the child's development? This study seems to support the idea that authenticity of learning will be negatively affected when sharing is absent. Furthermore, in the cases cited, the parent's role as teacher outside the school program is undermined if the extent and nature of opportunities for shared environments is minimal.

The Meaning of Parent Involvement to These Parents

At an epistemological level the meaning of parent involvement is intimately tied with the roles of mothering and fathering suggesting, perhaps, a qualitative difference in the meaning of involvement for each parent. For mothers in this study, parenting is their occupation. One part of the father's role is supporting and supplementing mother's actions. These mothers acknowledge five aspects of their job description that are supported by fathers:

1. maintainance of a high level of attachment with the child;
2. child advocacy;
3. articulation of the child's learning amongst environments;
4. parent education; and
5. support in program operations to effect quality programs (school and community-based).

Parent involvement means maintaining a high level of attachment with the child. Free communication between parent and child is a basic objective. Sharing knowledge about different environments the child experiences is one way parents maintain close feelings with their children. The nature and extent of shared environments is described by communication and joint participation. Opportunities for thoughtfulness enhance the quality and nature of attachment between parent and child.

For these parents, involvement is standing up for their children. It is being concerned and ultimately feeling responsible for everything that pertains to their child. It is a commitment made unique by parents' personal knowledge and the intersubjective knowledge shared with the child.

Parent involvement means articulating the child's learning. The practice of "thoughtfulness" is contingent upon direct observation. In as much as the parents can observe, they become knowledgeable about what an experience is like for the child; what the child wants; what interests the child; and the child's action knowledge that is developed. When the parents arrange a "conglomerate" of activities for the child they strive to achieve variety and to articulate learning that is experienced within environments.

For parents in this study, parent involvement is learning about child growth and development from secondary sources. Activities include reading both popular and research literature on child growth and development; listening to, and conversing with those whom parents perceive to be "experts" in the field; conversing with others within a parent group; and observing teachers. Involvement is wanting what is best for the child in an emotional, intellectual and physical sense. It is knowing the alternatives and opportunities available and ensuring the child does not miss out or is not "disadvantaged."

Parent involvement means visibly supporting the operation of school and community-based programs in which the child participates. The nature and extent of support depends on the program. Involvement may be as a participant in the program environment. Often, it is following teacher directions or requests for things to be done outside the classroom and school. This support is premised, in part, on the idea that teachers will be more effective.

For fathers, the meaning of parent involvement is similarly constituted. Given their work schedules, fathers attend to these aspects as much as possible. When mothers share firsthand knowledge about their observations of the child, and participation with him, it may enable fathers to be more supportive, better teachers and stronger child advocates.

Parent participant observation in program environments may well support and enhance the five facets of the parenting role described above. In the Grade One year, all mothers indicated in one way or another, "I don't really know any more what my child experiences at school because I'm not there." These mothers experienced a loss of control by their exclusion, in the Grade One year, from direct observation of their child in the school setting. Their belief that participant observation is consistent with their concept of parent involvement supports their desire for an open-door policy in the school program. Opportunities for thoughtfulness and maintenance of attachment, child advocacy, articulation amongst the child's learning environments, parent education, and acting as parent helpers all aid the parents in parenting.

At an ontological level it is appropriate to ask, "What is it like being an involved parent?" or "What is being an involved parent?" The affective component of a parent's relationship with the child is often very intense. What follows is a brief exploration within the ontological that seeks to assist the researcher in an understanding of what parent involvement means for two sets of parents in each of the three years of the study.

In the Preschool year, Dan Gordon related that Christmas concerts were fun. Patricia shared a feeling of pleasure along with Julie when Julie yelled, "I did it!" after having successfully tied her shoes for the first time.

Lois Blaine felt happy when she came down the stairs on Mother's Day and "Carl had Ivan in his arms and Andrew was standing there and his face was shining" (May.84.PI.B). She felt joy the same day when the Merryland Preschool kids' [paintings] and their voices were on television.

Andrew's statement, "Have a nice day, mom, and I want to give you a great big hug, mom (May.84.PI.B)" were often repeated thoughout the day. Carl felt "concerned that the entire educational process go 'right' for [their] kids" (May.84.PI.B). Lois enjoyed taking in a pasta machine to do something special on her helping day at Merryland Preschool. She regretted that it was hard to do these extra things because Ivan (younger child) was at an age where it made it difficult. Lois remarked that "You feel like you're signing your child's life away when you go to some Kindergartens." She did not "want to send him (Andrew) off to school and forget about him" (May.84.PI.B). Lois wished to remain involved in his learning. For instance she thought it fun to help him plan and plant a garden for himself at the same time she planned and planted her own garden.

From these comments involvement means joy, concern, and pride associated with sharing a situation. It is a firm commitment to the well-being of the child. It is experiencing the sense of accomplishment when the child performs skills or uses language to show emotion.

In the Kindergarten year, Patricia experienced a pleasant feeling hearing Julie express, "'Mmmmm . . .' as she tasted the scones and butter and ice cream that she'd helped make (April.85.Q.G)" on a school field trip to Albert Cowan House. Dan enjoyed special moments he created for himself and Julie when he added words and sound effects to bedtime stories. Patricia enjoyed being in the Kindergarten room "finding out what the teacher's doing, reacting to what is being taught, finding out exactly what [Julie] is doing in the program" (April.85.PI.G). She had a warm feeling when she held her child in her arms and read to her.

Lois was glad to see Andrew enjoying a new word and a new instrument, a 'metalophone,' during the last session of his early childhood music class. She "was happy that his behaviour, in general, was quite acceptable" (April.85.PI.B). Lois enjoyed Tuesdays between 11:20 and 1:00 when Andrew and she "go out for lunch alone and do something else he enjoys" (April.85.PI.B). Lois enjoyed being able to watch Andrew in the lake resort environment they chose for summer holidays. Both Lois and Carl felt it was hard to frequently pay attention to what Andrew was saying and listen carefully becaused it seemed he wanted to talk all the time. Carl was concerned that Andrew was not athletic.

It seems evident from these comments that there was little change in affect relating to the activities and experiences of these parents with their children. On the other hand, in the Grade One year, the four families had strong feelings about their child's school environment and educational experiences.

In the Grade One year, Patricia and Dan were concerned about the possibility of losing Mrs. Leighton and having Julie in a Kindergarten/Grade One split class. Dan and Patricia felt a sense of amazement when Julie proved herself competent on summer bicycle hikes, and when she knew all the words to many songs she had learned in the early childhood music program. Dan and Patricia agonized over the decision of whether or not to buy a computer.

During the Grade One year, Lois Blaine felt "torn." She was both happy and sad that friends and an increased number of extracurricular activities occupied Andrew's time. She was "happy that he is going out on his own more, developing and growing up, but sad to not have him around more" (March.86.PI.B). Andrew had "begun another stage of testing [Lois'] authority (March.86.PI.B)," but she felt "confident it . . . [wouldn't] get 'out of hand' and [they'd] both survive" (March.86.PI.B). Even though Lois felt the program was not appropriate, she did not like pulling Andrew out of a swimming program because she feared he might get the idea that whenever anything is hard it is okay to quit. She felt he was trying very hard in this course and was concerned that he might develop a real hatred of swimming if he continued. Lois felt good about a trip with Andrew, Ivan, their paternal grandmother, and aunt to visit Great Grandpa (84 years old) and eat his buckwheat pancakes and maple syrup. Lois felt that she would like to go into the Grade One classroom when the children were involved. She felt less comfortable and knowledgeable about what went on in the classroom this year than she did last year. She did not feel as welcome. Lois worried about the teacher's "random" comment: "I don't know what's going on in Andrew's life now, but there must be something exciting going on at home because he's really having trouble in class" (March.86.PI.B). On the other hand, Lois was pleased Andrew was in her class because she thought this teacher was "much more suited to a child with his personality" (March.86.PI.B).

It is apparent from Lois Blaine's remarks that she experienced a number of contrasting feelings associated with events taking place outside the home. These feelings appear to reflect uncertainty, not knowing and, in one instance, rejection. Some of these reflect her efforts to understand Andrew's entry into Grade One and the transition in his development. All parents in the study experienced some feeling of loss of control. Parent involvement at this time may mean seeking the necessary balance in perspective as the parent wrestles with change.

Implications and Recommendations

Parent involvement is not, and cannot be the same for every family because of the uniqueness of parent perspectives, moulded by an individual's interests and needs. Most importantly, perspectives are shaped by prior knowledge and experiences--actions upon, and reactions to the environment. Necessarily and desirably, parent involvement is perceived differently by different individuals.

Parent involvement is important because every child needs to know there is someone who is "irrational" (Katz, 1984) in terms of doing what the parent perceives to be most beneficial for that child. There is immeasurable security experienced by children who feel they have someone who (1) knows enough about what they are experiencing in everyday life as children and (2) understands and can help development of their decision-making abilities, social skills and curiosity within safe bounds physically and emotionally. Only when there are extensive and effective means for sharing environments between child and parent, can the child depend upon this support in terms of looking out for his felt and understood needs.

Similarly, a child will have a greater trust in the teacher who can demonstrate through shared knowledge (transcending the boundaries of the school program environment), a genuine concern and interest in enhancing the child's growth. A child appreciates a teacher who can show that what she has to offer the child will enhance that child's action knowlege (Barnes, 1975); that the child is really learning--realizing successful development, having questions answered, and gaining knowledge because the teacher understands the child's unique needs. When a teacher encourages children by applying meaningful knowledge from outside the school program environment, the children understand the school experience to be related to their outside experiences. The teacher shows concern for the child in a holistic sense.

From the present study, parents feel they want to "see for themselves." For example, some want to be aids because they perceive that by doing so the school experience will be more beneficial for their child. While some of these parents have a real desire to be in the program environment, in the Grade One year some feel they should trust the child's capability to deal with his perceived needs, responsibilities and choices. Perhaps they have to respect the child's need to experience independence--be in control of some part his life.

Children need to make judgements and, ultimately, decisions; they need to experience success and failure as a consequence of self-determined choices. Children need a non-threatening, supportive environment in order to develop the ability to come to mutually agreeable social arrangements with peers. The parent dilemma inherent here is that an accepting atmosphere structured such that the child can learn to take charge of decision-making, may not be offered in the school program. Without sufficient knowledge of the school program, the parent must have faith that a beneficial environment is, in fact, available for the child.

In the Grade One year as compared to the Kindergarten year, there is a significant reduction in the extent to which parents in this study feel they have knowledge about their child's school experience. The feeling from the participants (most strongly from mothers) is that opportunities for "thoughtfulness" on the part of both parent and teacher are reduced. Mothers felt the relationship between themselves and their child was changing. They did not share with the child as much time or knowledge of experiences as they had in the Kindergarten year.

The Grade One teachers did not have opportunities to see children interact with persons not a part of the class; namely, parents, siblings and teachers from other programs. By contrast, every Kindergarten teacher regularly observed the child interacting with the mother. Some Kindergarten teachers in the study organized activites so that interactions of the child with others could be observed; for example, siblings were invited into the classroom, and a special Father's Night was organized. Parents in the Grade One year were not able to observe their children interacting with peers and teacher, or taking action as a result of learning activities presented by the teacher.

The researcher feels a child gains immeasurably from parents and teacher developing means for meaningful sharing of knowledge through mutual understanding of the child's many experiences. Mutual understanding of more than one of the child's learning environments may dramatically enhance the child's development. Furthermore, meaningful sharing of knowledge can foster an atmosphere conducive to parent and teacher education.

Actions of teachers and parents can help create shared environments. For example, teachers may send home information about their particular interests, teaching strengths and family structure, and ask parents for one in return. This can be followed by home visits because a picture is worth a thousand words. This "picturing" is a potentially valuable practice and ought to continue from the Preschool year through the Grade One year. Teachers should be encouraged to do home visits. It should also be possible for parents to observe in a school program environment where parents feel accepted and the atmosphere is friendly. Where teachers are not comfortable with parent participant observation, it may be in the child's best interest for other educators to encourage knowledge and skill development of those teachers toward their initiating and facilitating opportunities for parents.

Teachers could set up a home reading program for parents similar to the daily reading programs for the children. The parent program would allow parents to send with their child a choice of materials the children would bring home for the parent to read. The parents who participate would better understand the teacher's perspective because the material available in the program would be teacher selected. When both have read the same information, there is a context to initiate discussions that may be educationally enhancing for parent and schoolteacher in their task as facilitators of the child's learning.

Another positive approach that opens lines of communication on the basis of an expression of caring is for the teacher to relate to the parent-as-teacher by telephone, observations that indicate improved ability or attitude on the part of the child. Another possibility is to prepare a flexible "guest" schedule to encourage a member of the child's family (mother, father, older sibling, grandparent) or a significant other (Godparent, leader in a community program) to come as a visitor to the classroom for a half day, once a month. The purpose would be to provide a shared experience for child and guest. There would be no pressure put on the guest by requiring a formal contribution. An education program aimed at teaching parents how to provide an atmosphere at home supportive of the school program, such as the program established by Smith (1968), seems appropriate if teachers verbalize that there is no support from home. In many cases parents may have limited knowledge about how to make the instruction the child receives at school more effective.

The parents in this study expressed the need to continue their involvement with their child in learning activities. Professional educators should do what they can to inform and aid parents in this regard because this parent-child interaction appears to be educationally enhancing for the child.

For parents who already understand that having the teacher know them and their child in a variety of settings enhances the child's development, there are ways they can offer to contribute. Families might be willing to accommodate a pot luck dinner for the families of six students. If these are planned for every other month, different groups of students and parents would come to know one another better and the teacher would have an opportunity to see the interactions of parent and child and gain knowledge of the child's experience as a member of the family. The teacher could arrange to observe the child actively involved in a learning environment outside of the school program, for example, a community-based program.

Most importantly, the study seems to point out that less formal interactions between parents and teacher are effective in allowing for the sharing of knowledge. The

~~greater~~ the amount of knowledge shared, the more likely there will be meaningful communication between parent and teacher. Subsequently, communication between parent and child, and teacher and child may be improved, resulting in a greater possibility of effective teaching and learning.

For these parents, it seems that the level of intensity of parental concerns with the child's school experience (the emotion attached) correlates with the degree to which their philosophy of education (life) is congruent with what they feel their child is experiencing.

There is no reason to restrict the examination and implementation of effective sharing of environments between parents and teachers to early childhood programs. In view of the fact that parents in this study perceived that there was a significant reduction in the effectiveness of communication from the Kindergarten year to the Grade One year, it seems appropriate to recommend research into the extent and nature of communication in subsequent years. Examination and implementation must be done with the healthy development of the child as a first concern.

Parent involvement in a child's education has always been an issue. Perspectives on the nature of parent involvement in the school program vary greatly amongst parents and educators. If parent and teacher perspectives on education are not congruent with what is offered in the local public school, some parents and schoolteachers have alternatives. Current Public School policy in some districts allows parents to choose the school they wish their child to attend. There are more alternative school programs from which to choose. It seems that in this pluralistic society a child's educational needs can best be met when the perspectives of the child's teachers (parent and schoolteacher) are known by each other.

Results of this study indicate that parents are also concerned about articulation of the child's learning inside and outside the school environment. Articulation depends upon parent involvement and extensive sharing of knowledge between parent and schoolteacher. Perhaps this is the key to understanding the meaning or nature of parent involvement relative to the child's school experience. Learning will be enhanced when parent involvement opportunities and children's learning experiences in both school and other environments complement and reinforce one another.

Suggestions For Further Research

1. This study could be extended employing the same research tools and carried on through elementary, junior and senior high school.
2. Valuable information for educators would come from similar studies of single-parent families, families where both parents work outside the home, or families who choose home-schooling for their children.

3. Studies that examine perceptions of parent involvement by children of different ages would help parents and schoolteachers determine healthful environments.
4. Research looking specifically at parents as teachers would develop a better understanding of children's learning styles and how to use a child's interest as a basis of learning.
5. Studies of family involvement in all environments would help educators understand teacher and learner roles amongst all family members.
6. Studies of parent involvement that pay particular attention to the effects of the exosystem and the macrosystem are important to identifying contemporary educational needs of learners.
7. Research should be conducted that examines differences in ideological and philosophical stances of parent and schoolteacher on child development, schooling and parent involvement, with particular attention to how it affects child, parent and teacher development.

Personal Reflections

Each time that I left after a home visit I was amazed at the knowledge I had gained that would have helped me facilitate that child's development--knowledge I feel I could not have gained in any other way. I came to anticipate that I would learn a lot each time. It was always so informative that I continued to have strong feelings about the educational benefits to the child available from even a brief encounter with the child's home learning environment. My personal experience leaves me with a strong feeling that when teachers make home visits they will not only be better able to meet the individual learning needs of their students but, also, they will be able to extend the child's action knowledge. I solidified my belief that parents are an important resource for the schoolteacher in making children's learning authentic; articulating learning inside and outside the program environment. I believe parents can be better teachers of their children outside the school program environment if they have more knowledge of the child's experience within that environment. Professional educators and parents must be encouraged to expand their "comfort zones" in terms of sharing perspectives, for the ultimate good of the child.

As a parent, I learned so much through dialogue with these parents. They were my teachers.

Where in all of this discussion, demanding, sharing, controlling, deciding and feeling . . . is the child? What does education and parent involvement mean for the child? Andrew states, "My mom and dad came along" to the Space Sciences Centre. He says that if his mother and father did not do things for him he would still have the TV and the computer. Julie says it would be boring if mother and father did not do things for her and when she is bored she lies on her bed. Matthew remarks that his mother chases him, and that he likes to beat up on his father. Dianna talks about her involvement with her father painting boards and relates in a very quiet voice with no expression, "It was very exciting." The children are the reason for it all. Being with them, making books, they shared their truly fascinating personalities and perspectives made infinitely more understandable to me because of my knowing something of their parents' perspectives, their neighbourhood, and their actions and reactions as they experienced their early childhood program.

How hard it has been to decide what was important enough to include in this thesis that would fill out the descriptions of perspectives. What I am saying by the choices I make is that from my point of view, because of my perspective, this parent-researcher believes this is important. For me, the sailent features from a discussion may be different from those another researcher would illuminate. Even in these concluding paragraphs, I am reminded of examples (not included) that are likely influential in terms of teacher and parent attitudes and actions. For example, Mme. Marceau went to some length describing her perspective as a teacher of "normal kids" because of how she had developed as an educator through experiences teaching children with special needs.

Two parents related to me that each had a sibling suffering from mental illness. One parent attributed this illness to the large family size and the lack of parent time available. Surely this has an affect on the meaning of parent involvement for that parent. Where does one draw the boundaries, make the choices, say this is what this study, this paper will present? It seems to follow that one also asks as a teacher and as a parent, "What depth does one strive for in attaining knowledge about the other's perspective? What is desirable in pursuing the enhancement of the child's development?"

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APPENDIX I

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide information by writing in the space(s) as indicated.

A. Child Activities - Complete the tables given indicating where time is spent by your child in the coming week and with whom. It is important that this be done each day and that the specific activities of that day be described. Include how the child and others felt about it.

B. Child Contacts - Complete the tables giving:

1. the person's sex
2. the person's approximate age
3. the approximate distance the person lives from the child's present residence
4. the number of days the child saw the person within the last 12 months
5. a comment on the nature of the involvement including feelings

C. Programs and Trips - Complete the tables.

1. List any programs (summer or winter) in which your child has participated since May 1, 1985. (e.g. swimming - once a week for ten weeks) Also describe the ages of the participants, the number of children and the number of teachers. Describe the nature of the involvement and how you think your child felt about it.
2. Record any major trips your child has taken since May 1, 1985. and give the length of time involved. Include names of others participating on the trip and describe the nature of the involvement with these people.

D. Mobility

Have you lived in the present residence all of the child's life? _____

If no, in how many places has the child had permanent residence (3 months or more)? ____

How many schools has the child attended since Sept 1,1985. _____

E. Parents' Work Outside the Home

Since May 1, 1985 has the father within the home worked outside the home:

Full-time? _____ Part-time? _____ approximately _____ hrs./week.

Since May 1, 1985 has the mother within the home worked outside the home:

Full-time? _____ Part-time? _____ approximately _____ hrs./week.

A. CHILD ACTIVITIES

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
6 AM		
7 AM		
8 AM		
9 AM		
10 AM		
11 AM		
NOON		
1 PM		
2 PM		
3 PM		
4 PM		
5 PM		
6 PM		
7 PM		
8 PM		
9 PM		

A. CHILD ACTIVITIES

THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6 AM	
7 AM	
8 AM	
9 AM	
10 AM	
11 AM	
NOON	
1 PM	
2 PM	
3 PM	
4 PM	
5 PM	
6 PM	
7 PM	
8 PM	
9 PM	

A. CHILD ACTIVITIES

SATURDAY	SUNDAY
6 AM	
7 AM	
8 AM	
9 AM	
10 AM	
11 AM	
NOON	
1 PM	
2 PM	
3 PM	
4 PM	
5 PM	
6 PM	
7 PM	
8 PM	
9 PM	

B., CHILD CONTACTS

PERSON	1. SEX	2. AGE	3. DISTANCE	4. NUMBER OF DAYS	5. DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE INVOLVEMENT INCLUDING FEELINGS AND ACTIONS (Use other side if necessary)
Father	m				
Mother	f				
Siblings					
Child's close friend(s)					
Other influential person(s) (e.g. close friend of the family, grandmother or grandfather through marriage, great aunt) Specify relationship					

B. CHILD CONTACTS

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
PERSON	SEX	AGE	DISTANCE	NUMBER OF DAYS	DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE INVOLVEMENT INCLUDING FEELINGS AND ACTIONS (Use other side if necessary).
Grandfather(s)	m m				
Grandmother(s)	f f				
Aunts	f f				
Uncles	m m				
Cousins	m m f f				

C. PROGRAMS AND TRIPS

NAME OF PROGRAM (e.g. swimming)	TIME INVOLVED	PARTICIPANTS & NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT (use other side if necessery)
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		
e.		
f.		
g.		

TRIP	LENGTH OF TIME	PARTICIPANTS & NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		

PARENT WRITTEN DESCRIPTION

Describe a time when you observed your child actively involved in a learning activity. It could be a time when the child was alone, with peers, another adult or yourself. Tell about the moment. What do you feel the child learned? How did you feel at the time?

APPENDIX II

PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

PURPOSE: To give a description of parent involvement. Impressions, feelings, mental images, and ideas parents have concerning involvement with their child. Parents' perceptions of learning, development and education and the relationships and circumstances encountered.

1. Tell me about . . . . 's year. What have been some of the most important times or events or development?

2. Have you witnessed changes in her/him over the year?

3. How do you think he/she felt about this last year?

4. What do you think were the reasons for growth, learning, and development?

5. What part do you think the program experience has played in this change or development?

6. How do you think . . . . learns?

7. How does he/she learn in the program?

8. Tell me about . . . .'s relationships at school (other kids, the teacher).

9. Describe a time when he/she was doing something with someone you think is important to him/her.

10. What are the following relationships like?
    father-child mother-child teacher-child
    child-child sibling-child

11. What is parent involvement?

12. What is your part in . . . .'s learning, growth and development?

13. Have there been any concerns or worries or times of uneasiness concerning the program this year?

14. Have you been directly involved in the program?

15. How comfortable are you that you know what goes on in the classroom?

16. In what ways has communication been maintained between home and school?

17. What is the home's responsibility and what is the school's responsibility with regard to education?

APPENDIX III

TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Teacher Background

1. Would you start by telling me about the training and experience you have that you feel is relevant to your job as a teacher in a preschool program?

Classroom Environment and Philosophy

1. What things do you encourage in the classroom? What are the important objectives?
2. What do you discourage children from doing in the classroom?

Parent Involvement

1. Considering the total education of the child, what do you feel is the school's part in that? What is the parents' part?
2. Is there, do you think, a difference in the way a child learns at school and out of school? Is this significant to a child's progress?
3. Do you feel that parents of children in your program know about and understand what their children are experiencing at school?
4. How is communication between home and school maintained? Whose responsibility do you feel communication is?
5. What does parent involvement mean? What is parent involvement?
6. Are there responsibilities that parents have or should be accepting in terms of the grade one program?
7. Is there a time when parents should not be involved?

The Child

1. Try to describe for me a particular time when you remember interacting with __________, or when you remember observing him/her involved in an activity. How do you think she felt at that time? What were your feelings and why do you think you remember that specific time?
2. Could you choose some people whom you think are important to __________ and explain his/her interaction with each one?

Other Comments:

APPENDIX IV

CHILD INTERVIEW GUIDES

CHILD INTERVIEW GUIDE - 1984

1. Where in your home are you allowed to play? Are there places in your home you're not allowed to play?

2. What things of Mommy's and Daddy's are you allowed to use?

3. Who are your favourite people to be with? Don't answer right away. I want you to think about Mom and Dad, aunts and uncles, your friends, Gramma and Grampa, cousins, brothers or sisters. WhoM do you like to be with? Why? How do you feel then?

4. Tell me about a time when you did something with your Mom. Why do you remember that? How did you feel?

5. Tell me about a time when you did something with your Dad. Why do you remember that? How did you feel?

6. Tell me about a time when you did something with a friend. Why do you remember that? How did you feel then?

7. Tell me about a time when you did something with your brother or sister. Why do you remember that? How did you feel then?

8. Tell me about your teacher. Tell me about something you remember her doing in the classroom.

9. Whom do you do things with at Merryland Preschool? Why?

10. What things do you do at Merryland Preschool? Why?

11. What other things do you do? Why do you do that? What is it like?

12. When Mommy or Daddy come to help at Merryland Preschool how do you feel? Why?

13. How do your Mom and Dad know what you do at school when they don't come?

14. Think about all the things you like to do. Inside the house, outside the house, at parks, at lakes . . . What are your favourite things to do? Why? How do you feel then? Why?

CHILD INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviewer: This is going to be a book about things that you can remember doing at home, at school and at other places. You are to draw pictures and then tell me about what is happening in the pictures. BUT for each picture, I want you to tell me what your Mom or Dad had to do with the picture. You can put in the words if you want, or you can tell me the words that go with the picture and I will take the books with me, put the words in and bring them back to you later in the week.

I then asked for and recorded, descriptions of the pictures and asked other questions. The activity was audiotaped.

1. Can you remeber Mom or Dad coming to the school? What did he/she do? How did you feel about that?

2. How do your Mom and Dad know about what you do at school when they don't come?

3. Tell me about your picture: activites - at home
   - at school
   - at other places

   Who are these people? How do you feel here? Do you do things with your Mom? Your Dad? Your sister or brother? Whom do you like to be with? Why?